

Q and A with Eckhart Tolle TV Part 8

[Speaker 1] (0:02 - 9:00:12)

For most people, even wherever you live, there will be something natural when you step out of your house somewhere. Even if you live downtown, there may be a little tree somewhere. Not acknowledged by most people.

Almost everybody walks past it without looking, because they have more important things to think about. But you, for a moment, you acknowledge that. Not by saying, oh, I should be acknowledging the tree.

You just acknowledge, you give it attention. And in that moment, you notice little things about it that before you didn't notice. How the quivering leaves, how the light shines through the branches or the leaves, how the light interacts with the tree.

And you notice all these things without having to call it anything. It's just a noticing. And this is a practice.

You can practice that as a choice. Because you choose to relate to nature in a different way. And when you do that, then nature gives you something back.

What it gives you back is some of that energy of connectedness with the source that the tree is still in. This energy comes back to you. The tree gives you that back.

It says, have some of this. I have more than enough. And you get, so it helps you to feel that connectedness.

But you are also helping the tree. I'm saying that intuitively. The tree hasn't spoken to me like that.

Maybe some trees speak to some people, but not to me. Well, Prince Charles years ago said he talked to the plants. And that's of course a wonderful thing.

And I think he meant he not only talked to the plants, I think he meant he gives them his full attention. And ever since the newspapers have been making fun of him because they don't understand. It's just the mind doesn't want to understand that.

So, you're giving it attention. It's not just that the tree, and I'm only using tree as an example. It could be a tree, it could be a flower, it could be an entire forest.

Because the attention that you give, you can give to either a single natural phenomenon or being like a tree or a flower or even a blade of grass or a little plant, whatever it may be. You can also give attention to a more inclusive energy field like an entire valley. That is, it has its own energy field, its own spirit almost, one could say, or a forest as you walk.

So there are two modalities, one could say, of being there in, let's say, it's a forest. You can notice single things, like trees or plants, and for a moment you give them attention. There's a looking, an alertness.

And then you look at something else. And there's no choice really involved in not saying, okay, what can I look at now? It happens naturally.

Your eyes, you'd look at this, and then suddenly you look at something else. And then you look, you take in the totality of what's there, just a general, without always necessarily focusing on one thing, you take in the totality. And that is, there's an expression in Zen which is translated as a choiceless awareness, an expression that also I believe Krishnamurti used, choiceless awareness of, so you take in the totality of what is around you.

And then the nature, the entire energy field of what's around you then connects with you, and you connect with it. So it gives you what some of that connectedness with a source that nature never lost almost transmits itself to you. But it's a reciprocal process.

What you give nature is the awareness of itself, because we need to remember that nature, it's not that you are separate from nature, you haven't been put into nature, you have come out of nature, you are nature also. You are nature that is in the process of becoming conscious of itself. And so what you then give back to the tree, or the flower, or the forest, is awareness of itself.

It recognizes, because this flower, it, I would say it does not know it is beautiful, it just is, the flower is. It's beauty is there, it comes from the source, and now when any human perceives this flower as a true act of perception, not conceptualizing it or judging it, something responds from within. There's some, something is touched within, there's such beauty there, but even to call it beauty, you don't need that.

There's something there, something within responds, almost a recognition, because, and when you perceive in such a way, you realize that you and it are not separate. The illusion of separation which is created by the thinking mind disappears, and there's a sense of oneness. When you are not calling it anything, this pure, spacious perception, immediately there's not me and the flower, there's a continuum.

The flower arises within the field of consciousness, it comes out of that, and so this is really what love is. You love the flower because you recognize it as ultimately one with who you also are. You're connected to the source, through the flower you can connect to the source, but you feel it within yourself.

It's an amazing thing, allow nature to take you back by choiceless awareness, presence, you can allow nature to take you back to the source, but as it takes you back to the source, you are going to the source with the awareness, full awareness, of the beauty, of

the sacredness, of whatever you want to call it, full awareness. And then suddenly you have a love of nature and a deep empathy with nature that even the people who lived before the human mind developed into the monster that it has become now, there were people who lived close to the land, close to nature, that was a natural oneness, they didn't even know it because there was nothing else. So natural, simple people who lived close to nature, they didn't know the preciousness of nature because you can only know the preciousness when you're beginning to lose it, then it becomes precious.

When there is nothing else, then it's just what is. In the same way, if the entire world were painted green, the color green would not exist, you wouldn't know it. So this is a having lost, which seems like a tragedy on the one hand, that we lost connectedness, well we didn't lose it, but it's forgot, our connectedness with being is lost.

Being or with a source became obscured, almost we could say we lost it, and it seems a tragedy, but it's not really because I believe it was a necessary cycle in the evolution of humanity, because it's only by losing it that you then regain it at a deeper level, at a new level is reached, and that is why we are here, that's the process. But your practice then needs to be bring your gift to nature, nature has a lot to give you, but it only can do that if you bring your gift to nature, and that gift is consciousness, awareness, you are there, when you go anywhere in nature, or even in the city street, there will be something, whether it can be the clouds, it can be even the way of the sun, the sunlight, that's nature too, acknowledge all these things with your awareness, by bringing awareness to it, and that looks like I can only, one can only say that much about awareness, it needs to be experienced, and what I mean by awareness, you can never understand unless at least for a moment you become aware, I could be speaking for weeks about awareness or presence here, and you would not know, conceptually you might know everything about it then, you could write a PhD about awareness or presence without ever knowing what it really is, so let me just demonstrate very simply what awareness is, it's just senses are alert, visual, even if there's nothing to hear, can still have an alertness, auditory alertness, and you know what happened, I talked about it at the beginning, the mind becomes still, when you have nothing to hear, there's nothing, beautiful, that's just what raises awareness, to become aware of what awareness is in yourself is the key, nature can help you there, and speed up this process, so, but the vital, you don't need anything beyond this moment, you have nature, you carry it around with yourself, in yourself, as this physical form, awareness is the key, sometimes it's called attention in some teachings, doesn't matter, you remember the Zen teacher who would always say, when they asked, please explain the meaning of Zen, he would always go, like that, and that was the explanation, another Zen story, the disciple said to the master, I'm going off somewhere else now, can you just write something down for me so that I remember the essence of the teaching, obviously he didn't have it yet, otherwise he wouldn't have asked, he still thought it was something memorable, so the teacher wrote on a little piece of paper, whatever they had, attention, and the disciple looks and says, okay, can

you just say a little bit more please, I need a little bit more, and so the master writes something else, and the disciple looks and reads, attention, attention, oh, well, I wanted just a little bit more, can you just write something else, and then the master writes, and then the disciple reads, attention, attention, attention, so the disciple becomes a little bit frustrated, and well, I know that now, the disciple says, what does attention mean anyway, and the master says, attention means attention, oh, that's the end of the story, whether he got it or not, we don't know. This attention is the vital thing, and there is no tension in attention, it just happens to be a similar word, so if it's, there's no straining, there's no, it's not concentration, concentration is just focusing on one thing, and there's always some straining involved with it, it goes, attention, it facially looks like, so that's not it.

There's a little bit of the very young child, if you can, in true attention, there's a little bit of the openness of a very young child in whom the conceptualizing mind hasn't started up yet, before the child starts asking the question, what's this called, what's that, what's that, and before they start asking, why, why, why, before all that, of course they have to go through that stage, but before that, there's a moment when there's already consciousness beginning to blossom, but not yet taking form as thought, so there's a short period where the child is in that state of open attention with light shining through their eyes, and then they go, what we are then really talking about is the cessation of thinking, of having to think, not forever, thinking still happens, but there's actually the choice not to think, when there's nothing to think about, which is a lot of the time, a lot of the time, nothing is added to this moment by thinking about it, the depth, the fullness of life now, you cannot add really anything to it by thinking, some situations require thinking, that's fine, many situations don't require thinking, that's even better, and if you have to think, prior to thinking, enter the state of attention or no thought just for a moment, and you will see the quality of thinking improves, the thinking that you then do, or that then happens, but to have spaces of not thinking, that's what nature offers you, otherwise you're not really using the vastness of its wealth, nature, when you are thinking about it, you can only, the vastness of that is only accessible to you when there is the spaciousness of not thinking, it doesn't matter for how long you don't think, don't try to stop your mind as such, because that creates a conflict in yourself, and you would perhaps try to exercise willpower, and you may have limited success, if you go out into nature and say, I mustn't think, and you'll probably stop breathing too, so there's no willpower that can't do that, one way of not thinking naturally is, yes, bringing attention to sense perceptions can be very helpful there, just bring attention to sense perceptions, then there won't be enough attention left for thinking, if you're fully attentive with your senses, there's not attention, not enough consciousness left for producing thoughts, just you're too alert, that's a simple thing, another one that is, you can do in daily life and not just in nature, is work with the present moment, accepting what is now, whatever form this moment takes, you say, fine, this is what is, and then you will think much less, a lot of thinking is there because you're trying to get away from what is, so if you're not you

can become friendly with the present moment, you become more relaxed, open to life, and naturally, the compulsive thinking mind subsides, because there's only ever the simplicity of now, of this moment, so that's a, you can do it in nature more easily than in the office, of course, you can do it in nature more easily than in the shopping mall, you can perhaps do it more easily when you're alone in nature, than when you're with a friend in nature, because two people together, most people think, okay, what can we talk about now, let's talk about the stock market, okay, so it's probably easier alone than with a friend in nature, but visiting your family, visiting people with whom you share a lot of past, to then to remain clear, present, requires more intense presence, so nature then is a good place to start being present, and then you, a wonderful thing happens then as you're, as the present deepens, you can bring your presence anywhere you go, even visiting your relatives, or even the shopping mall, not that you might choose to spend more time than necessary at the shopping mall, because the compulsion to acquire, which is a substitute for a feeling of aliveness, will have left you, so the compulsion, what can I get now, why this compulsion to buy things you don't really need, because for a moment you get a sense of aliveness, and that moment is quite short, it's when you pay for, when you pay for the stuff, and then they put it in the shiny bag, and then you say, there you are, oh. And then you walk home, and there is the bag, and then you take it out, and then the sense of fulfillment quickly leaves you.

And then so this means of course another visit to the shopping mall is required, and so why that? Because for a moment you feel there's a sense of lack in most humans that comes from disconnectedness, they cannot sense the being within them, they cannot sense the aliveness, the being that they are, they cannot sense the I am, the primordial sense of beingness, they're disconnected from that, they're up in the head, and the head says, I need, and now I need, what else do I need? I need this, and I need that, and I need that, where can I go?

Look, maybe that will do it, or that, oh I need another meal, I need another chocolate cake, whatever, on whatever level the neediness manifests it will be there, I need another relationship. I knew somebody who had enough money, and he bought one car, a very expensive car, and there's nothing wrong with that, it's fine if you enjoy a car, but very quickly he found it didn't fulfill him the way he thought it would, and so I think that was, what was it, Aston Martin or Bentley or something, and then he bought a Ferrari, and then for a while that was, yeah, that's it, and then that wore off also, and then he bought another one, they had three cars standing there, and he said, oh, that's a piece of garbage, it's a piece of garbage, it wasn't fulfilling anymore, and so that really is whatever, all these are substitutes, and of course, unfortunately, if the whole economic structure that we, well, it's a little bit shaky now, this is probably a good thing, but the whole economic structure can survive only if enough people still live in that neediness to consume, if not enough people consume, they say this is very bad, the economy is going downhill fast, people are not consuming anymore, of course you will, so what I'm talking

about is the neediness, the neediness to have substitute fulfillment then goes, so we create a different, very different society, very different world is then created, of course the transition will be a little bit painful for some people, but the more you are surrendered to life, to the present moment, the easier it will be, so nature then is the, can be for many people the entry into the state of being, connectedness with being, because nature is really being, through every form of life, being speaks, not through words, being communicates itself to you through every natural form, and within yourself also, through, existence is the forms of life, existence, billions, billions of life forms, underlying the billions of life forms is the one life, so you are not just that, I am an expression of the one life, a temporary expression of the one timeless life, can you sense, that question is, can you sense the one timeless life within yourself as consciousness, can you, at this moment, can you feel your own presence, your own awareness, these words are not quite right, it's not yours, nothing is yours, but let's just for a moment put it like that just to get you there, can you feel, can you feel your own presence, which don't mean your thinking, I don't mean your feelings, they may be there, but underneath it isn't there, isn't there a presence that perceives this moment as in whatever form it arises at this moment, isn't there an underlying light, isn't there an underlying space in which all this arises, even if it's all a dream, it might all be a dream, but even then, if it is a dream, there's no point in arguing whether it's a dream or not, isn't there an underlying space in which the dream arises, somebody's having this dream, who is that somebody, you, but not you as the person, the person is part of the dream, if it is a dream, well it's dreamlike, that's for sure, because everything passes very quickly, it certainly is dreamlike, our existence is dreamlike, there's no doubt about that, but who is having this dreamlike thing, to whom is it happening, to me, who are you, you can't attach a name to it, you are consciousness, the essence. So when I say can you feel your own presence, another way of putting it is, can you be aware that you are aware at this moment, can you know, aware of your own awareness, aware of awareness, self-awareness, self-realization, you don't need to think, there's nothing to understand in it, nothing to understand, just that, and that's the transcendent dimension in you, it transcends everything, transcend means it's beyond, as it says in the Buddhist scripture, something like, what is it, gāte, gāte, gāte, beyond, beyond, gone to the farthest shore, gone beyond, and this is not a, some extraordinary state reserved for one person in a billion, it's a natural state, because we had lost it for so long, it just seems so extraordinary. It's the most wonderful thing if you can go into any situation as that clear space, not as a person, the person is there for a while, you can still bring the person out of the cupboard when you want it, if people ask me what do you do, or whatever, usually I say something, yeah, I'm a writer, okay, that doesn't create any problems, I don't, I'm not saying I am formless consciousness and I was never born, and that would lead to problems. So you can pretend that you are a person and then give a clear answer, and that's fine, and still know that that's not the truth at all, not that you are lying, but it's a tiny, tiny temporary aspect, and still be there as a spacious presence in any situation, doesn't matter where anymore, just spacious presence, and a lot of the time don't need

to think, just be there as a presence, and you are truly, that's true intelligence coming into this world, real intelligence is not what the IQ test measures in you, I'm incapable of doing IQ test, I mean, I've never done one, but I just looked, glanced at one and I know my IQ would be very low, my mind doesn't work in that way, it doesn't work analytically, and so that is only a tiny aspect, this is not true intelligence, I'm not saying that because my IQ test would be low, it's not, nor should it be an insult to anybody who has a high IQ, and I'm now removing their sense of identity by saying it doesn't matter that much whether your IQ is high or low, it's not that, but there's a true, the true intelligence is the unconditioned consciousness, the thinking mind is the conditioned consciousness, conditioned by the past, conditioned by innumerable factors, conditioned by the language that you inherit, there's past in every word that you inherit, the moment you start speaking a language, you inherit an entire world view that's associated with that language, an entire energy that comes with the language that you're born into, and then that becomes part of who you think you are, your identity, it's not, it's a temporary acquisition, it's a form of conditioning and then people are, I'm English, German, Italian, Greek, whatever, it's nothing to do with who they are, it's a form of conditioning, so, and then there is the unconditioned, unconditioned and underneath it, spacious awareness, unconditioned, and everybody, it's in everybody, just stop thinking for a moment and there it is, and the mind says, oh, that can't be that insignificant because there was nothing happening just now, and then you don't need to desensitize yourself anymore and all the other substitutes that you may have for a sense of aliveness, whatever drugs people use to feel more alive for a little while, relationships, they need to change relationships quickly because quickly the novelty wears out and then, okay, maybe somebody else will finally make me happy and do it for me, maybe he's right here or she, and there's nothing wrong with any of these things, buying something or even enjoying a drink or whatever, but the compulsive nature then is no longer there, you don't need substitute aliveness, another one of course is drama in relation, you need the drama to have to feel we are still alive, we haven't been fighting in one month, something must be wrong.

Even with your dog or cat, if you have a dog or cat, approach them as much as possible, not through language, of course sometimes you speak, but approach them just bringing also awareness, just look, watch your dog or cat, how he runs around or rests or eats or sleeps, and just bring aware presence, look into their eyes, connect with the, because there's so much being coming through them, through their eyes, and that's why people are drawn to dogs or cats, they love them, and even people with big egos, they sometimes when they see a dog, they go, oh, for a moment the ego subsides, for a moment they look into the eyes of the dog and they feel a little bit more themselves even, more, oh, and again that's nature, it's the being that speaks through this little animal, more connected than the master, than the owner, the being of the dog, and this is what people relate to in the animal, this is why they spend so much money on their animals, because it gives them a glimpse of being, of that connectedness, but it's a

secondary thing, but if you can be, the dog can help you if you bring, always realize it's in you, you feel that in yourself when you relate to the dog or the cat, it's not in the dog, it's also in the dog or cat, but it is primarily felt here.

Thank you. Thank you. A door opened, it means it's time to finish, and there comes the dog.

Hi! Hi! Hi!

On E.T. TV we can have some stillness, on normal TV that would be dreadful. Often people ask questions about manifesting, or the power of, not the power of now, the power of intention, and how does that relate to the power of now, and about wanting, or one person asked a question about what's the difference between wanting, continuous wanting that I write about in A New Earth, always wanting or needing the next thing, and what's the difference between wanting and intention, intending to create something, and what is the importance of manifesting things in your life, or creating, or is that counterproductive somebody asks, maybe we should focus on something else, not on manifesting or creating. Now there are many exciting books these days, about creating and manifesting, the secret teachings of Abraham, channeled teachings, and so on, and so it's always interesting often people ask, well, how does that relate to stillness, and inner peace, and acceptance of what is, and surrender to the present moment, and living in alignment with now, is there a conflict, is one wrong, or misleading, or leading you into illusion, and how does that relate to manifesting, and so they ask, and then expect me to answer. So this is an important question for almost everybody, unless you've reached the age of 95, and then you can be almost sure that you're not really into manifesting anymore, when it's, you've done that, been there, done that, and some people don't have to reach 95 before they have a feeling that my life is not, does not need to be focused anymore on creating or manifesting.

So it may have something to do with the stage, not necessarily chronological age, there's some, it has something to do with where you are at in your own life, but really your own life is a microcosm of the microcosm, so if you look at the universe, the first thing you see that it likes to create, and it likes to manifest, on this planet alone, the universe is continuously creating and manifesting countless life forms, millions, millions of life forms, and then outer space, we can only assume, we don't know what exactly is there, but there's a vastness of life out there that we don't know, that's for sure, and probably many more life forms than we have on this planet, which is more than we can count, and the life forms, both in the sea and on land, including humans, they seem to enjoy a dance of coming into being and destruction, they eat each other up, if you're born in the sea, you go around, it's a transformational process, and this entity becomes you, and then suddenly something comes up from behind and gets you, and you become that entity, continuous dance, and also if you observe life on this planet, the universe also seems to manifest conflict, and sometimes people say, I don't want conflict, but if

there were no conflict at all in your life, challenges, and so on, what would that be like? Imagine going to a movie that has no conflict in it, and you're sitting there and thinking, would that be interesting? Maybe, I doubt it.

A movie in which nothing goes wrong, everybody's perfectly fine all the time, no challenging people, everybody's so conscious that nothing happens, it's, well, could try that, maybe that's an idea for a script writer, or maybe the script wouldn't be very long. How many people would come and watch that movie? Don't know.

So you have that, by just looking, not having a theory about life, but just looking, you see that the universe loves to manifest, and also it seems to be the case that life forms over periods of time become more differentiated, many more come, and even the human societies become more complex. We've had ancient civilizations that were quite complex, but probably our present civilization, if we can call it that, is the most complex, which of course includes problem-ridden also, that goes with complexity, it's full of, and every individual who is part of this civilization has a life that is full of problems, because you live in a very complex civilization, so it produces complexity. I mean, computers, just getting into, I can't get into that anymore, maybe I've gone beyond that age.

It's so complex, I cannot learn all this stuff that you need to know on computers. Boys can do it, six-year-olds. To me, it's too complex, and the differentiation of the analytical mind, science, cutting every phenomenon up into little pieces, and then you have little pieces, and then each piece is cut up into further pieces, and the microscopes get bigger and bigger.

Now let's examine that, and everybody's specialization gets narrower and narrower, because you have to be, because there are thousands of people writing PhDs about your subject, so you have to have only a little corner, and then you have to take that out and then examine that, and then spend three years examining that. Complexity. Of course, complexity cannot go on forever.

On some level, complexity, at some point, if a tree grows too many branches, eventually, suddenly, a winter storm comes, and most of it collapses. So the universe likes to create, to manifest, to experience a play of form. That's one movement, and you can see it in yourself.

On some level, you enjoy that, or you enjoyed it, or you still do enjoy it. And then there's something else in humans. You can only really see that, perhaps, in yourself, an inner phenomenon.

The universe also wants something else. It wants not only to experience that manifested life, it also wants to experience peace, and something that is not touched by the continuously fluctuating forms. It wants to know itself deeply, directly, and to experience that.

In its essence, and that really is the root of spirituality, is that the universe not only wants the outward movement, it also wants the inward, the return movement to the one. And so, every human being also embodies these two movements, and that seems, you are torn sometimes, between the outward movement into form, and the inward return movement to the source where it all started, but the source that was never really lost, that is still there because it's timeless. The source of all life is timeless, and it's in you.

And you feel drawn back to that, and that is the pull towards spirituality, peace, and the stillness being, rather than doing. And then you wake up the next day, and you look in a shop window and say, oh, that looks nice. I need to get that.

I'd like to do this, get that, achieve that, and then you get, okay, but on the other hand, I want peace also. It's the two, exemplified by perhaps, Eckhart Tolle exemplifies the return movement mostly, and you have Tony Robbins goes, it's that. And not one or the other is right or wrong.

It's only, perhaps, few. Totally lose yourself in one or the other, maybe that's not quite it, unless you live in a cave somewhere, and you can lose yourself in being. Can, is it possible, and perhaps this is a challenge of the universe here on this planet, and perhaps on other planets, is the challenge to reconcile the two movements, rather than have them separate, either one or the other.

Is it possible to reconcile the inner and the outer? Movement towards stillness and being, and the outer, it wants action and doing. And I would say that it is, and that is our challenge at this time.

Traditionally, let's talk about human doing and action first. Traditionally, it's been very unconscious, what humans have manifested in this world, to a large extent, has been unconscious. They have been identified with doing, and identified with form, because form is about the outer, the creation of form, and your own form, and creating more forms.

And so, that has been going on ever since anybody can remember, recorded history and beyond, this identification with form, and identification with doing, and we call that ego. Now, what happens then is that the one consciousness that underlies everything, timeless, formless, the one consciousness moves into form, assumes forms, and enjoys the play of form, but it's not enough, it seems, for the one consciousness to enjoy the play of forms. It needs to completely believe in it to really make it real.

It's not real, but to make it seem real, you need to lose yourself in that dream of form, the play of form. And this has happened to humans. So, identified with the form, that you believe yourself to be a separate entity.

You have a life of your own. There is no such thing, but a life of my own doesn't exist.

There's only life, and you are an aspect of that one life.

But humans believe that I have a life of my own, and then others have their life. And of course, if I have a life, then of course, one day I could lose, I'm going to lose my life. Oh, God.

I'm losing my life. I lose my life. Who are you, and who is life?

You must be separate from life if you can lose your life. So who is saying I is not life? Who is that I?

What is that I that says my life? Consciousness. The unmanifested, timeless, one life.

So every human then believes that they have a life of their own, and become, that means, they're identified with the form of life, that particular form of life. This particular physical body. This particular sense of being.

This particular psychological life form, the thoughts, accumulation of thoughts, your past, your history, your viewpoints, and the emotions that go with these thoughts, feelings. It all becomes all part of that form identity. That's me, encapsulated form identity.

And so consciousness is trapped or believes to be trapped in that. So we could say that in that state, the universe or the consciousness has entered a dreamlike state. It wants to do that.

It must enjoy that dream up to a point. Consciousness has entered that dreamlike state, where it is completely identified with form. It doesn't realize that every other form is an aspect of itself.

Every other form. And of course, then you are just an isolated entity. It becomes quite unpleasant after a while.

So you have to get together with other entities, and instead of having an I form, you have a we form, us. And that becomes encapsulated. It starts with a tribe, or big family, or tribe, us.

And all the others are totally weird and evil. People just beyond the mountains in another valley, you go, they're all dreadful. That was quite common, and in some places still is, when people didn't get around that much.

To the Greeks, or also the Romans, everybody beyond were barbarians. The word barbarian comes from trying to imitate the foreign language that those barbarians speak. So there comes then, and for a while that universe seems to be okay with that, to have consciousness identified completely with form, and then the movie goes on.

You read history, world history, and that's the movie of what happens when

consciousness is identified totally with form. And then comes a point when it's time for another stage to arise, where the dream of form is no longer, your consciousness is beginning to awaken from complete identification with form. And that is happening to many humans, and this is why human beings are drawn to spiritual teachings, with the awakening from the dream of form.

Who am I? What does it mean, I? What is identity?

What does it mean when I say I? What does it feel like? What is I?

What am I? Now most people, yet if you ask them, who are you, they will define the word I in terms of form. They will say, well obviously this body, that's I, that comes maybe first, and then there comes the mind with its accumulations, its accumulated, its habitual thought movements, its memories.

There come the emotions that go with the thought movements, the psychological form of I. So they say, well I am this body, then there's a name, which of course is just a sound. You say, John, I am John.

And many people say, they think that's already a big part of who they are, when they can say their name. Oh, okay. And then they add a little something else.

I'm an architect. Oh, okay, we're getting even closer to who you are. And I'm a father, which, okay, good.

And your age, okay, something like that. Okay, we're almost there now, just need a few more details, and then we know who you are. And so you can put it on a piece of paper, a summary of it, or if you want a detailed account of who you are, you can write down your life history in a book, and it becomes your autobiography.

Oh, that's interesting. Now we know who you are. And if that's not enough, and if you think there may be hidden parts of me, then you can go to psychoanalysis for 10 years, and then all these hidden memories and hidden desires and feelings that you had when you were four and a half years old towards your mother and your father and your grandmother.

They all readily, they all come up, and then you can add that, and then, okay, now I've got it. I've got my autobiography, and that's I. I'm me.

I'm complete now. And then you look 50 years later, which is not much on a universal scale. 50 years is very little.

I know that now. I thought when I was 20, 50 years was a lot. I'm older than 50, by the way, by the body.

The 50 years pass, and what's left of the body and the psychological me, that entity in

the head with its history, what's left? Nothing. Well, maybe there's one or two copies left of your autobiography, and maybe one person finds a copy in a secondhand bookshop.

This is somebody's autobiography. And your grandchildren or their descendants, well, after... My mother passed away three years ago, and I realized recently that I'm virtually the only person now who remembers her, because all her friends died before she did, and her family.

And all the other people who knew her only knew tiny fragments. They said, oh, she was a little bit of an eccentric, and she was outspoken, and so on. They had little fragments, but the person who really remembers her more than a fragment is me, and when I go, nobody remembers her.

And then all that's left is photos, and a generation later, nobody will know who this person on the photo is. But this is strange how an identity evaporates that seemed so solid and real. And so form, we're talking about form identity.

That is when you're asked, who are you? Or you ask yourself, who am I? Okay, now is that all there is to who you are?

Is that what can be defined through form, what can be that which is form, thought forms, emotional forms, physical forms, a conglomeration of that put together for a while becomes what you think is I. Is that really your I, your identity? Or is there something else?

Well, perhaps we can just, at this moment, see as you sit here, right at this moment, you don't remember your past. You don't have to. Let's pretend you don't have one.

You have no past. There is no past. Let's say there is no past.

Which, by the way, is the truth. Ultimately, there is no past. There's only the now.

So, okay, and no future. Let's pretend there's no future. Well, there is no future anyway, but there's only this.

So you can't remind yourself. You don't even, unless there's a thought in your head that says, I am such and such, even that you don't know right now. Let's say you don't know anything about who you are.

Nothing that you can formulate, conceptualize, call something. You don't, what is left, is there, what is lost? Nothing is lost.

In fact, when you encounter this which cannot be named, which is a formless presence, aliveness, that's the, you've touched that which is beyond form, consciousness itself. And that is identity. That is where your sense of I comes from.

And so you are more truly yourself when you don't remember your past than when you do remember your past. And you are more truly yourself when there's not a single thought in your head than when you are full of thinking, thinking about me and my problems. And whenever you feel this sense of I, this, the light of consciousness, which you can know directly in the stillness that is always there, available to you as the essence, your essence identity, your essence identity, timeless, that's always there.

And that is one with universal consciousness. It's just coming through this form. It's never lost.

When this form dissolves, the consciousness goes out like a little tentacle, being. So let's stay with this for a moment here. You have no past or there is no past.

What is lost? Nothing essential is lost. You get a stronger sense of who you are in your essence when you are not telling yourself in your mind who you are.

This is why I said in Stillness Speaks, I believe, you are never more truly yourself than when you are still. And still means, of course, the mind has become still. It's an inner.

Whether there's noise outside or not doesn't matter. You're never more truly yourself than when you are still. Then you can sense the essence of who you are.

And that does not depend on the age of the body, whether you're 20 or 90, it's the same stillness. That frees you then from the suffering that comes if you have identified with form, which then sooner or later will leave you, you suffer. If you identify with a strong or beautiful body and that body eventually grows old, you begin to suffer.

Because you seem to dissolve. You haven't realized who you are. And so we have, you have form identity and essence identity.

And suffering, you begin to suffer. Suffering arises through knowing yourself only as form identity. My history, my story, my body, my past, my this, my that, my that, my, my, my.

It's whatever you identify with in the world of form. If you know yourself only as that, that's the state of form. The state of unconsciousness, the dreamlike state.

Consciousness is dreaming the dream of form. And then it acts, attempting to become free of its inner state of incompleteness, dissatisfaction, and fear, which is inevitable when all you know is your form identity. There's always underneath the surface or even very much on the surface, there is dissatisfaction, fear, unease, discomfort, fear, I am not enough.

This is not enough. This is not the right place where I am now. This is not the right people I'm with.

This is not the right thing that I'm doing right now. There comes the need to go out and

search for more forms that I can identify with so that I can feel more complete. But the only way you can actually reach the state of being at home, being rooted in yourself without the dissatisfaction that always comes again and again and again, and without the fear, the only way is encountering that which is beyond form.

And it's so much, it's right here. It's closer. It's God's realization.

It's another word for it, but let's not go there. The God within, the timeless within. And so the universe then has, all the people who are into creating traditionally have been very unconscious because those who were most identified with form had the strongest desire to manifest and create more things out there and conquer an empire or accumulate more and more possessions or have more power.

So they got driven. So all the powerful people, the people who created human history, if you read the history books, they were deeply identified with form and they were all unhappy of course, very unhappy, hoping by achieving this, that or the other and conquering this, that or the other, the other tribe or whatever, to become free of their state of unhappiness and of incompleteness and never getting there. And that's been, so traditionally the doers, there were always some people who were not into doing, but in many traditional societies, there wasn't much of a place for them.

Later monasteries came into being so they could become monks. Long story. So we still associate going out and doing with unconsciousness.

I believe there's a line by T.S. Eliot in a poem where he says, the best lack all conviction and the worst are full of passionate intensity, talking about contemporary humanity, early 20th century. The best lack all convictions means that they don't know what to do. They get, because they are torn between, there's some inkling of inside them of their essence.

So they're not, the desire to do is not as overpowering as it seems. And those who are totally identified with their form identity. So that's an interesting that where we are at as humanity as a whole is a realization that there is an essence that has nothing to do with a form.

And only if we are rooted, if some of our attention is in that formless essence, can we do things in this world without creating more havoc and suffering for others and ourselves. If we only go into doing without the rootedness in the eternal dimension, which is stillness, which is here now, always now, then there will be no more inseparable from now. Whatever you do, you lose yourself in the doing.

Identify it again with form and creating some new problem. So the foundation for all doing is conscious being. So that's the important realization about what about manifesting.

That's good, but before we talk about manifesting, before we build some new building or structure, get the foundation first. Do you have the foundation? Don't start building a house without any foundation.

Let's manifest this great business empire. This is going to change the world. Yes, but have you laid the foundation?

What foundation? Being. Being?

The formless, the formless. The eternal. No, we haven't thought about that.

No, of course you haven't. You can't think about it. The foundation is being rooted, realizing what that means, what being is.

Not intellectually, not by trying to understand, because as you may have noticed, there's nothing much to understand about being. Being. Can you explain a bit more, please?

Being. Stillness. I don't understand stillness.

Can you explain stillness? No, because there's nothing in it to explain. You can't look at it under a microscope or dissect it.

Aspects of stillness, PhD. So the human needs to find its, his or her, timeless and formless essence, essence identity. That's the foundation.

If you haven't that, forget about manifesting or creating. You just create more trouble. That's okay.

Then you're at the stage where the universe still likes to create trouble. That's okay. And I'm not saying you, you, you, you, you find that which is so close, closer to you than hands and feet, the stillness, the formless consciousness itself, without which there would be no sense perception and no thought and no feeling, that it's a light in which everything appears, that which, the life within the form.

And that's always there as your S right here. It knows itself here. It's not that I know it.

It is I. I am it. I and it are one.

I know myself. I know the universe. Sounds like two again, but that's because we're using language.

I know myself. I know I. I, the I knows itself.

And so this is the end of all differentiation and complexity because you're going back to the timeless, unmanifested source of all life. There's no complexity in that at all. Depths, yes.

Infinite depths. The vastness. The vastness of the as vast or vaster than the outer space.

It's inner space. The vastness of that inner spaciousness. So what you thought of as I is a tiny, tiny bit.

And underneath there's a vastness that is as vast, although not an extension as outer space, which is an externalization of who you are within. The vastness of inner space. People don't know to what extent they have reduced their own reality to this little entity that runs around the surface of the planet for a few years and then evaporates.

And of course, that's the form. But what is it that animates that form? The foundation.

And it's not something that you find, say, okay, I've got it now. And then you forget it again and then you start getting bored about the next thing you have to do. And identify it with every thought that comes again and reacting.

And you lost, not this. The secret is to stay connected with the being while you do. And then whatever you do is conscious doing, not unconscious movement, unconscious creation of form, but conscious creation.

And maybe you'll do much less than you would have done before, but it's more powerful. Very different kind of doing. Conscious doing and conscious manifesting, if that's what happens through this form.

Foundation comes first and remains primary. Being needs to remain in your life. Whether or not you are engaged in a lot of doing or not, being is primary.

If you lose touch with being, you lose yourself in your mind and you lose yourself in doing. And you don't want to do any good for anybody, really. And it may well be that the universal consciousness may use you and you do something that is then in alignment with this new stage that is arising on the planet.

And then you do something that is conscious creation, co-creation. Before the universe created unconsciously, and now through the human form, there's a possibility that the universe can create consciously. In that sense, all those books and teachings are quite exciting that tell you that there is an important relationship between your thoughts and so on, and the outer reality.

And that thought creates form. Yes, this is true. Thought creates form.

And it's exciting that if humans can fully realize that, and then fully realize their power, their creative power, which is vast. And as unlimited, eventually they'll know that as the universal creative power, because humans and the universe are not separate. You are an aspect of the universe.

You are the universe expressing itself as this form. So it's wonderful, creative power is

there, but it's not the wanting power that is the, to understand the universe. To answer the question that somebody asked, what about this wanting, needing comes from a state of dissatisfaction and insufficiency.

Now, Buddha called it desire. And the Buddha of course said, become free of desire. And then that's the end of suffering.

He looked at humans and he saw that there was this unconscious reaching out continuously for wanting. He called it desire. I call wanting is a more direct term that you can actually feel.

I want, I need, I must have. Now, this is still very much in many humans there, the identification with form that results in continuous wanting. And it keeps a lot of our economic activity system going.

Advertising depends on humans who are identified with form. It does not mean that when you are, when you know your essence, you cannot enjoy form anymore, that you will say no more. Maybe some humans might do that.

But again, there's a possibility of living in balance with form. You can enjoy all the forms around you and even create new forms without any sense that this is mine or any sense of attachment or any identification with the form. And only then can there be true enjoyment of forms and beauty.

But then the compulsive nature of your relationship with form will go. The compulsive running to shopping malls the day before Christmas and then running to shopping malls again the day after Christmas because they've reduced the prices even more or whatever. It's amazing.

Before Christmas they're all running and then after Christmas it's even cheaper. I need, I must have, that's not the true enjoyment of form. You can enjoy form by looking at a shop window and say, oh, beautiful.

Well, what, do you want to buy it? No. Or you might buy it and then it's in your house.

Oh, it's beautiful, beautiful. And then maybe the next day you arrive and a burglar has been there and it's gone. Oh.

And it may only be in that moment that you know whether you were attached or not. Because you might have had it in your home and said, I'm not attached at all. But when you get home the next day and the burglar has taken it, then you'll know whether or not that was true, what you thought that you were not attached.

That's a good test. So we need to then, doing and stillness need to be in balance. Now it does not mean that you separate your life into one part of your life is you sit still and in

the other part of your life you run around.

That's not the balance. The balance is when the two are fused together. And even while you're walking around the shopping mall, not running around the shopping mall, walking, you can be in stillness as you look around.

You may, perhaps you go with the convention of buying Christmas presents or maybe you don't. Doesn't matter. If you do, okay, let's see what I can find.

Still. Bring the stillness into the shopping mall. Let it come with you into the shopping mall.

Just to give one example in the North American context or the bazaar or whatever if you're somewhere else. And see if you can, even while your attention flows out, have some attention within. Feel the background of aliveness or stillness.

As I always point out, the beginning of that is feeling the inner body, the aliveness within the body. That's the doorway into the formless. You're already moving into the formless.

Feel the alive. The body is alive. No, it's alive.

It must be alive. But can you feel that it is alive? And that's life energy.

It's the bridge between formless and form. And there it is. And then if you can walk around the city, well, here you don't walk, but you drive around.

If you drive around the city, can you drive with not too much thinking, just presence? Or walk around to the shopping mall and just look. You bring a stillness in wherever you go.

And then when you have to think, you can pick up the phone and say, oh, I found something nice. Maybe should I get this for my mom or dad? Whatever.

Always the two dimensions. That's the most vital thing. And then you can also look into manifesting.

But then the question is, what is it that wants to manifest through this form? It's no longer, this is what I want, the surface I. What is it that wants to manifest through this form?

Very different. And you may not know that immediately. There may be a time period when you don't know exactly what to do with your so-called life, which is not yours, just a conventional way of speaking.

There may be, for a while, you don't know what to do with your life. And so you're just there, being as still as possible, doing whatever activity you're already doing, but bring stillness into it, presence into it. And then at some point, either the realization of what it

is that you need to do, that wants to be done through you, comes from the outside.

Somebody tells you something. Or you wake up one morning and say, ah, this is what I have to do. And then you start taking action, always making sure you're not so attached to the outcome that you think it's more important than the present moment.

An action can become egoic when you lose yourself, it becomes egoic when you lose yourself in the doing. And a good sign or good criterion is when something happens to, that is against your, seems to be an obstacle, a person or situation. Say, I want to do this or achieve that, and suddenly somebody says, no, you can't do that.

No, they won't allow you to do that. Or a situation becomes a challenge, it's difficult, it's blocked, you want to go. Somebody says, no, you're not qualified to do that, you shouldn't do that, it's not allowed, whatever.

You need this and that, which you don't have to achieve. Obstacles come all the time. If you get upset, that means the ego is back in the doing when obstacles come.

If you're not upset, you're still present and you look at whatever the obstacle is, and you look at it with this penetrating gaze of presence, which is stillness also. You look at whatever the obstacle arises, you bring this penetrating stillness to it, and that is like a light shines on it. And then that dissolves the obstacle or it shows you a way around it.

That's the power of consciousness. It always happens. Either it shows you how to get around it, or it shows you how to use the very force of the obstacle, and you turn it around, if the obstacle is wanting to go this way, and you go with it for, I'm just demonstrating now, something counteracts what you want to do, it's coming this way, you want to go that way, but you don't meet it head on and start complaining, say, no, this shouldn't be happening. No.

Perhaps you go with it for a little while, and you go, and then you turn it around. And the very power that was against you then works for you, and you achieve your goal through that. It happens, and this is the wisdom that comes with non-resistance.

So whenever you go into this conscious doing, resistance always pulls you back into unconscious doing. It can easily happen, because it's an old habit pattern, unconscious doing. Inner resistance to whatever arises in the present moment pulls you back.

Inner resistance is some form of negativity, some form of complaining, some form of fear, aggression, anger, and this is important because whenever you complain about what somebody else does, you're already beginning to fall into that trap of unconsciousness. And of course, yes, you meet lots of people who are still trapped in ego, and they may not like what you do, but just no judgment. Just look at what the situation, they say this, they want that, you want that, and they don't say, oh, they're dreadful, I know what he wants, he wants to deceive me, and he always does that, he

wants to go.

No, just clear, this is the situation, this is what he says he wants, this is where I want to go, and see, okay. Never any judgment of a person or situation, just clear seeing, clear facing. This is the power, it's like a light beam of consciousness that falls onto the illuminates that situation, that moment, that person.

That's the power of consciousness. No resistance. Jesus already talked about the power of non-resistance, and the moment resistance comes, you're drawn back into identification with form, protection, resistance, fighting, it's a, are you going to succeed all the time in this?

No, it's a shift from a way of doing that has been with us for thousands of years, and a new way of doing that is only arising now. So you are transitional beings between the old consciousness and the new, and don't judge yourself if you fall back occasionally into the old consciousness, but you will quickly know it, how will you know it? You begin to suffer.

You get upset, you get upset about situations, you get upset about people, you get upset about what somebody said, you get upset about what somebody should have said but didn't, you get upset about what somebody did or failed to do. Oh, there's a sign that you've fallen back. Beautiful line in the Course in Miracles, I am never upset for the reason I think.

Now, upset is a generic term, could be any, in any way that you're out of alignment with is-ness, there's a disagreement with the is-ness of the present moment, and then you become upset. Now, many people are upset a lot of the time, but they don't realize they are upset, and if you talk to them and say, why are you upset? They say, I'm not upset, I'm just bloody angry.

Or, I'm not upset, I'm deeply hurt because he didn't invite me to his birthday party. Deeply hurt. Not upset.

I'm never upset for the reason I think. Now, the deeper meaning of this, of course, is you are upset because you have lost awareness of being, your essence, identity. And the reason, you think, is superficial.

If it's not, when you lose connectedness with being, just wait a few minutes and something or somebody will upset you. And so, if we believe that that which seems to cause the upset is the actual cause, this is not the case. These are interchangeable, could be anything.

And it will. So you'll be upset many times every day. By other people, by situations, by the slightest things, or the biggest things.

Upset, upset, upset by the entire world is so frustrating. I'm never, so that's a little sign

then, if you're upset, you want to go somewhere, but people are not cooperative. Situations are not cooperative.

And you can talk to yourself. So that's a good sign then. You can use, also shows you to what extent the ego is active in you, because what's upset is not you, it's the ego in you.

The ego is the erroneous identification with form, a false sense of I, which wanted something to make itself feel more at ease or bigger or more important or whatever, and is frustrated in its aims. Well, that's a good, then it's like a little, if you had a little it's almost like having a little technical device on your arm that tells you whenever your ego comes back it goes, bleep, bleep, bleep, bleep. You don't need that.

Well, if somebody here is a technical wizard and is going to invent it, it's fine. But you don't need that, because all you need is to know if you're upset or not in everyday life. Now for many walking egos, upset is their normal state.

They might not even know it anymore because they're upset virtually all the time, and just waiting for some other thing to happen to explain why they are upset again. But of course there's the underlying dissatisfaction is always there. Foundation then is stillness.

That's the return journey. That's the return journey. So can we be then simultaneously in the return journey to the source of all life, spiritual dimension, God, stillness, and still be active in this world?

And then if we are that, what we then do in this world becomes empowered by the intelligence that emanates from the source. And then the source creates through you. No longer, the power of the source is then no longer distorted by the ego, and its power greatly diminished to a trickle.

So the source is like light, you can say sunlight, wanting to shine through fully. But for a long time it's become reduced to a tiny little hole, and there's a little bit of light coming through just to keep you going. And now it can come through, and the use you, when we use language we always create duality.

So when I say it uses you, it's not quite true because you are it, but language does that. It uses, let's then, once we know that it's okay we can use those words. It uses you then.

Now what exactly it wants, I don't know, perhaps it simply wants to create beauty, or forms that are alive and joyful, and enjoy that. It's enjoyed the drama for thousands, hundreds of thousands of years. It's enjoyed the drama of people cutting each other to pieces and eating each other up.

It's enjoyed the drama. The movie is changing now, and perhaps it's creating a much more pleasant movie. And who knows what is in store for us.

I've never, I can't predict the future. I'm not particularly interested. The present moment is wonderful enough.

But something is, there's a change happening. And of course there comes a point in your life when you may not, the source may become much more important than whatever you do. So you reach a time when you say, well, I've done this and that, and it's been wonderful.

And then all you are is you are just still and you emanate that stillness. And even then you affect the world around you without any doing. If you just be there, and whoever you come into contact with, there's some almost, one could say transmission, even if they don't notice it.

You can do that, and some humans perhaps will mostly live in that way. How much doing you do, how much varies from form to form, person to person. Some will be very active and conscious, into conscious doing and create and enjoy the creation.

And others may do relatively little, or may just continue to do what they are doing already, but whatever they are doing will be a vehicle for consciousness or stillness that flows into it, this power, this beautiful energy that flows. It could be even a person who just gives information. Let's say you work at an airport and you give information to people, and maybe you stay there, and then everybody who comes to ask, where is gate number 16, you say, well, you go that way, and it's only about a three minute walk.

And there were not only the words, there was a transmission of stillness with the words. Not in the sense that I am going to transmit stillness, no. It happens because you let go of the sense of doing, of I do, it happens.

And the person, this one traditional word for it is blessing, the person goes away being blessed with that energy. And so, when you do, beautiful, so what you do really is secondary. Some may do great things.

Others may do things that look on the surface not so significant. And ultimately, what you do is secondary, but how you do it is primary. And how means the consciousness that flows into what you do.

Or if you're working with your hands again, it can also happen that how do you put together this piece of wood and this piece of wood, there can be presence that flows into the doing, and that's beautiful, and that expresses itself in the final product. If something is made in the state of presence, then it contains energetically, it contains quality, quality. Now there are perhaps quite a few things in this world that are not at all conducive to presence.

Maybe it could be certain things that are extremely repetitive. Even that perhaps is possible, but let's say you're in a factory and all you do every day is, well probably by

this time you've probably been replaced by a machine anyway, but there are certain things, or you live in an office environment that is so insane that when you bring stillness into it, there is an incompatibility with your surroundings that will result in your dismissal, or will result in your walking out. But if there is even the slightest compatibility, if it's not 100% insane, the environment, if it's only 90% insane, then there may be a possibility that if you bring stillness to it, this alert stillness, you walk into the office and you listen, and you're alert, and you answer the phone, and you go to the committee meetings where everybody's, and you sit there and listen to everybody, you don't say, oh everybody's insane.

You know they're insane, but you don't say it mentally. They're not insane in their essence, that is on the surface. And you are there as the still point.

It doesn't mean you can't speak anymore, but you embody the being, rootedness in being, and then it is possible if it's only 90%, the environment is only 90% insane, some change is possible. And perhaps the one or two people will be changed by their interaction with you, and a shift happens in them. Or if it's a meeting, suddenly there's a change in energy in the room.

Or suddenly you are the only person who says something meaningful, and suddenly everybody listens. Or your silence is enough to bring some harmony to the surroundings. Many ways in which this can affect the outer world, and even if you stay at home, and all you do every day is water the plants in the garden, and make a cup of tea, and look around, and you're still there, you're still there at the beauty, like a little child, but with a depth that is perhaps not yet there, a depth of non-conceptual knowing, then at this you are a point where the universe is contemplating its own creation, and knowing its own beauty, and its sacredness, and its aliveness, and through you.

And that's enough for a fulfilled life, isn't it? That's enough, the mind is in, yes, but I should be doing something meaningful that is meaningful, and for some people that is how they contribute to the shift in consciousness, by being a point of consciousness through which the universe sees its own sacredness, its own beauty, where the flower recognizes its own beauty, because the flower doesn't know it's beautiful, it needs you to perceive it and respond to it, and go, not call it anything, but go, really there is no ultimately separation between you and the flower, it's a single field. So when you contemplate the flower, the flower becomes conscious of itself through, it's one consciousness, and so if you provide that, that's a wonder, that's the universe waking up through this form to its own sacredness, and beauty, and aliveness, and depth, and all you do is walk around the garden every day, and make a cup of tea, it's wonderful.

And if that's not enough, then occasional thoughts come, maybe thoughts that come will say, wow, I made all that. You become like God, and God saw, he rested on the seventh day, and he saw that it was good, or something like that, at the end of May, he saw that

it was good, see the goodness of all that. And so it varies, you may be, I call, one word I have for that which I used in New Earth, a person who is not called to do very much, is frequency holder, because what you do is not a doing, you hold the frequency of that consciousness of presence, and you don't have to do anything, you just hold the frequency, by embodying it, by embodying presence.

That's a fulfilled life, every moment is fulfilled. And who knows, it could be that you do that for two years, and one morning you wake up, and suddenly, suddenly something wants to be done, and suddenly you start doing something, and you pick up the phone and say, we're going to have to do this, a huge enterprise where everybody can come and experience beauty and healing and so on, I'm going to transform my garden into a healing center, and I'm going to, maybe, maybe not. One person asked the question, it is connected with this, somebody who is fully awake, would they still have a personal identity? And of course we know the answer by now, you are in touch with your essence identity, and the person can still operate.

You have the two dimensions, you have your personal identity, but you are not lost in your personal identity. You know that it is not ultimately who you are, it is only temporarily who you are on the surface, but not who you are in your essence. And so in that sense, no, you still have a personality, but you are not possessed by your personality.

It still operates, and you can function normally. You don't need to look weird, but if you do, that's fine also. You certainly have no desire to stand out and say, I am special, of course then you would have fallen back into some form identity.

There is something to be careful of which is called the spiritual ego, one could say, and that is the identification with form, coming back even sometimes to people who are able to periodically go into the stillness and feel the power and be that, and then they come out again, and then the old ego pattern reasserts itself, and it remembers the beauty of stillness and the power of stillness, and then it says, oh, I am very special, more special than you.

Well, it may not say that in words, because the ego at that stage can be very subtle, so it doesn't say more special than you, but there's just a sense of superiority that can creep in easily, the sense of me, and again, one needs to be careful. Any kind of conceptual identity that you really believe in is another trap, being trapped in form. Ultimately, you're only yourself, and you fully, when you have virtually no concept in your head of who you actually are.

Now, that doesn't mean when somebody asks me, when I go somewhere, whatever, across a border somewhere, somebody says, well, what do you do, what's your profession, or what do you do, I don't complicate things by saying, I don't do, or I don't do, or I don't do, I be, I just be, and so it's good if you have a little concept that you can

give to a person if the situation requires it, you can say, I'm such and such, and then they believe you.

Don't say, I'm a spiritual teacher, when you cross a border. Teacher is okay, spiritual teacher, and of course, you're not a spiritual teacher, and I'm not a spiritual teacher, because that's another form identity, if you believe I am a spiritual, that's who I am, and then the next moment when I go do my shopping, I'm no longer a space of a large presence in the supermarket, but I carry around the identity of, here's a spiritual teacher walking around the aisle. Very subtle traps can happen. Now, that doesn't mean that at this moment, this form, spiritual teaching happens through this form, so I could say at this moment I'm a spiritual teacher, but when I get up, I'm no longer a spiritual teacher, it's only a function, it's temporary, in the same way that I could do somebody's accounts, well, I couldn't, but, and I would be an accountant, but if I carry accountant around with me in my head, I'm a walking accountant, I mean, that's a terrible trap, you know, it's only, these are only functions, they're not who you are, or whatever it is, any identification with that brings you back into form, and so to be free, and that's a continuous practice in daily life, to be as, one can express it negatively, it's not negative, but it sounds sometimes negative, to walk around as nobody in particular, not be anybody in particular, just be as a presence, but nobody in particular, just an alive presence. You don't need to be anybody in particular, except when you conform to the conventions, when you talk about yourself, it's fine, you observe the conventions of this world and say, I'm a doctor, I'm an accountant, I'm this, I'm that, not a spiritual teacher, but whatever. But not to be anybody in particular, this is these, to be free of carrying around with you a defined identity, which is either, in many cases, it either take, puts you into position of superiority towards others, or an inferiority towards others.

If you have some defined identity, you always look to, then you give everybody else an identity too, that's a dreadful thing. It's not only you create the present for yourself, everybody else, once you look at the world through your defined identity, then you give everybody else a form identity. First you do it to yourself, once you've done it to yourself, you do it to others, and then you reduce every other being to a form.

And then usually, because all this is part of ego, usually then you will try to locate where this other being is in this form, as either superior or inferior to you. It's an unconscious process, where does this person fit in? The ego is always looking to where inferior or superior, am I inferior?

And if ego feels inferior, it's uneasy, and then tries to get something to reduce the other, so that you can feel, if only make negative comments or whatever, or say, or if somebody, on a very simple level, the other woman wears a very nice dress, and you feel diminished by her beautiful and expensive dress, you say, oh, that dress would look good on your sister. The ego loves to do these unconscious things, because by diminishing somebody, it believes that it has grown a little bigger itself. Amazing

delusions, it's a whole delusional system operating.

Gossip, by talking negatively about others, every time you say something negative about others who are not there, this is quite a common thing, you feel a little bit superior, because you have judged the other as not good enough, certainly you have put yourself in a position of judging the other, which implies that you are superior, morally or whatever, you know what she did, she did that, and then she said, and then how dare she, and then, she's always wrong, of course.

Amazing silliness, but for many people, it's their life, that's how they live. So be nobody, so to speak, be a presence, but don't define yourself, except when absolutely necessary, when you have some interaction with somebody who says, what's your name, and so on. Of course, name, nothing wrong with your name, as long as you don't believe that that's who you are, and so on.

But the practice is to gradually shed the belief that you are here as a person, and just be yourself, so let the person become transparent to the light of consciousness, and then you have the two, there's the form, but essentially, you are that which animates the form, the underlying deeper consciousness, and that, by living in conscious connection with that, you live in conscious connection with an intelligence that is far greater than whatever your mind could manufacture, although it may use your mind, but it will then inspire your mind with creative insights, creative ideas, and so on. It can use your mind, or it may bypass your mind, and will simply emanate throughout every cell of your body, you emanate a beautiful, alive, peaceful presence.

If your mind is not highly developed, it may not say, universal consciousness may say, well, this mind is not that great, I'm not going to use this mind, but I'm going to use the entire body to emanate peace and aliveness and presence and healing for the world. It uses whatever is there, or if you're an artist, then suddenly your artistic creations become inspired, empowered, beautiful. In my case, that doesn't happen because I can't draw and paint, it just doesn't happen, so the consciousness is not going to flow into my arm and my hand, and suddenly I'm going to produce a masterpiece, and that's not going to happen, nor am I going to produce the unified field theory that Einstein couldn't find, because my mind doesn't work in that way, physics and mathematics, it just, so the consciousness is not going to use my mind and bring up, make me into another Einstein. The consciousness uses what is there and empowers that, and there's always, everybody has something that consciousness will use and flow into, if only every cell of your body, that's more than enough, and then there's nobody to claim credit when something has been produced, created, you just step back, it's not, I did that, or the way people go, yeah, yeah.

No, you just step, because you know it's not, not I didn't, I did it, yes, but not I, it's, the one I. Welcome to our gathering, meditation, talk. As you may know, I spent a little bit of

time with the Dalai Lama recently, and one of the most impressive things he said, and he said it several times during those days, when people ask him all kinds of questions, complicated questions, the impact of technology on the economy and the economic and this and that, and several times I heard him say, I don't know.

Now, you can look upon this as a kind of, this as something, a superficial thing, I don't know, or something that's actually very significant, because it points to a certain state of consciousness, in which the realm of conceptual thinking isn't that important anymore. And I could actually feel that many people felt love towards him deepening when he said, I don't know. People laughed, and he laughed, and there was an opening, which would not have been there if he had given a very clever answer.

And sometimes, after he said, I don't know, actually, he said something that was meaningful and deep. At other times, he didn't. But it started, whether or not something came out of that not knowing.

The point of departure, the foundation, is that state in which you don't need to know conceptually. And once you realize that, it's a kind of denial of the self, the mind-made self, because the mind-made self lives on taking up positions of knowing, opinions, viewpoints, judgments. And the more one is identified with opinions, viewpoints, judgments, reactions, the stronger the self, which already the Buddha discovered a long time ago, that sense of I, a me-ness, the me that's ultimately illusory, and creates all kinds of trouble and problems for yourself and for others, if that's all you know.

If that's the only dimension that you move in, the mind-created self, then you will create suffering for yourself and others. So to come to a position of, not a position, a place of not knowing, it is an act that from the point of view of the self looks almost, one could say, negative. It looks like a kind of suicide, self-annihilation.

Who am I if I don't know, if I don't have a position, some mental position that I identify with, what's left of me? So we come to the denial of the absolute reality of the form of me. We don't need to go as far as saying that some teachings do, some spiritual traditions, they proclaim that to be, the whole thing is totally illusion, they say, and from a certain perspective you could say that.

The whole thing of egos walking around this world, going through their drama, and then dissolving, and then other egos coming up and going through the same kind of drama and dissolving, and the same kind of drama and dissolving. So you are born, and then you go through a little bit of turmoil here and there, into one or two little happinesses, and then that's the end. But mostly, of course, while you are in between the birth and the death, you are waiting for the end of problems, and while you wait for the end of problems, you are creating problems for yourself and others.

That's ordinary existence, normal existence. And so this act of self-annihilation, this is

one way of putting it, it sounds a little bit frightening, self-annihilation. But all that's annihilated wasn't real anyway, not in absolute terms, it was relatively real, one could say.

The fact that we are here is relatively real, but it won't last for very long, so was it ever really real? If it dissolves like a dream, if the whole story of me dissolves like a dream very soon, in that sense, it's very fleeting like a cloud. So the vital question then is, do you assert the self, or do you deny the self?

Can you live in a balance where the self is still there, but you don't realize it not as ultimately who you are? So when the Dalai Lama says, I don't know, and of course everybody projects something onto him, he's the Dalai Lama, so they give him a strong identity. Now his challenge is not to fall into that same illusion.

In other words, people believe that he's a mountain, and he knows his deeper reality is that he's a valley, and that's your job too, to know that for yourself, not the illusory self, the essence of who you are. So there are the two modalities, the two dimensions that you move in, on the one hand, in the world of relativity, the relative. Yes, you exist as a form, a physical form and a psychological form that thinks and acts and has feelings and has a history and a so-called future, not that it ever comes, but that's another matter.

In the world of the relative, you can say there is a past and a future, that is not true in absolute terms, because of course you've never experienced past or future, so it can't be true in absolute terms. It has never been in your immediate experience, there has never been any past or future, only now. You remember the past, well it's now.

You think about the future, now. In absolute terms, only in relative terms, yes, let's just say for a moment, yes, there is a past and future, that's all part of the form identity as which you appear temporarily, a mountain, me. Now, the form identity naturally wants to strengthen itself, become perhaps, if possible, bigger, a bigger mountain.

I'm only a little hill, I want to be a bigger mountain, and so you do things to strengthen your form identity. That can be done in many ways. Most people, many and probably most, spend their whole life trying to somehow defend, at least defend, the little that you have, the mountain, to keep up this mountain, defend your form identity from injury and so on.

Even the slightest insult is an injury to your form identity, so you have to be on your guard. Or they try to add something to their, something more I can identify with, as me, so that I can stand out more. That's the need of the form, the self, to stand out more.

Now, is that wrong? Well, there's no wrong or right or wrong, it's just that something very important is missing. I am not saying if your desire is to be a better person, that's not a bad thing, to be a great actor, actress, I'm just saying that because we're in L.A.,

and it's full of people who want to be great actors and actresses. To stand out, it's not necessarily, you're not saying, don't do that, no. But is your life one-dimensional? Is your life only concerned with defending and strengthening your form identity, the mountain, by adding more things that you can identify with, and then the mountain gets bigger.

And if you can't find positive things to add to the concept of me, if all else fails, you can start complaining about the people and other people in the world, and be very negative about how dreadful the whole thing is, or what life has done to you, how unfair it all is. And in doing so, you also strengthen your form identity, because you are more unfairly treated by life than most other people. And so the mountain can grow bigger in that way also, not just by becoming a multi-millionaire, can the mountain grow bigger, or by becoming a famous actor, the mountain can also grow bigger, the self, by continuously complaining, and being annoyed, and being against this and that and that.

Always find something to be against, and taking up a position against. So some egos or selves are just mainly preoccupied with finding something to be unhappy about, and then voicing it, either in their head or out aloud. And by doing so, their sense of self, the mountain, gets bigger.

And so, in very extreme forms, you can see it, occasionally you meet people in the street, they are talking out aloud, and uttering one curse after another. And they're all, they're blaming everyone, and when you pass, they might say something to you, it's not personal of course, how awful is he, who do you think you are? And so they have built up an enormous mountain, so anything can be used by the self to strengthen itself.

And of course it can be done in very subtle ways also. Some people are very spiritual, much more spiritual than most other people. And they do all the right things, so that their self-concept, which again is the mountain, is in a more subtle way, bigger than other mountains.

Or they're religious, which means of course they are right and everybody else is wrong, except their little group. Oh, that's a very, very good way of strengthening the mountain, the self-identity of me, the righteousness of it. And again, you're missing the dimension of the absolute, the dimension where you are not the mountain, because when you are the mountain, you're identified with that, the surface of life.

You are unaware of that. When you identify with the valley, and now what that means, we'll go into that, then yes, there's still some form here, but mostly there's the formless. A similar example could be given, you have a bowl.

This example is actually mentioned, I believe, if I remember correctly, in the Tao Te Ching. You have a bowl or vessel, and on the one hand you have the form of the bowl or the vessel, and to most people that's what is there, that's all there is. Not realizing that the most essential thing about this vessel is not the form, but it is the space, which you

cannot see, cannot be perceived by the senses, does not have to seem any existence at all, because space does not stand out.

Space is the valley. And so in every human being, the two dimensions are there. Yes, you are a mountain, you exist, because to exist means to stand out, Latin root, ex, out, exist.

You exist, you stand out as a form identity, yes, but you are also, and more essentially, the formless. Now, that can only be found underneath all the forms and all the doing that the self is engaged in all the time, to realize that beyond all the doing and thinking and activity, there is a silence or a stillness in you also. And that could come as a glimpse, next time somebody asks you a question and you say, I don't know, and for a moment, the mountain has become a valley.

And in that moment of saying, I don't know, where you have not emphasized your form identity, you have, one could say, surrendered your form identity, and if you are very alert, in that moment, you feel deep inner peace. I don't know. It's actually so nice not to know.

I don't need to know. I don't need to know. So it could happen in that little moment.

I don't know. What is your position on the health debate? Now, everybody, of course, has their position.

That's how it is. You're wrong. I'm right.

Now, I haven't followed it very closely, so I can truly say without making any effort, I don't know. But if you have followed it closely, it's more difficult to say, I don't know. And if you have a mental position, am I saying, get rid of your mental position?

No, that's too much to ask. But if you realize, yes, there's a mental position in me, and that's how it's, I think that's how it is, how it should be. If you recognize a mental position as a mental position, then also there's already some freedom.

You're not totally identified with the form, which is the mind form. There's also a little bit of the valley in you. And then you don't need to be aggressive to somebody who says the opposite of your mental position.

You can still say, well, this is what I believe, and yes, you know the nice phrase that probably started in the 60s in psychotherapy, and it's now become a normal speech, I hear what you're saying. Now, this is not always used in the original sense. I hear what you're saying sometimes is used, you're just, underneath it it's saying, and I know that you're wrong.

Originally it's meant to be used in that state of openness, where you don't, and that's a wonderful thing that happened at the beginning of an opening, where you don't

completely identify it with the position of me. And so there's freedom. So in many, many ways that are easily overlooked, on the one hand overlooked, in many ways the valley in you, the valley nature, which is really the timeless, the absolute, the non-relative, the eternal in you, whatever name you want to put it, it is there, the formless, without which nothing could exist in the world of form, consciousness itself, whatever you want to call it, to be aware of that dimension in yourself, even while you're pretending to be somebody in this world. You still go about your business with a name, a history, and even opinions, but no longer totally identified with your name and your history and your opinions.

And there's an enormous difference between having an opinion and being in the grip of an opinion. To be in the grip of an opinion means to be in the grip of your mind, and mistaking that for who you are in essence, defending what is ultimately a relative truth. Why is it relative?

Because very soon you won't be anymore in this form. So it is your, your life has to move in this dance between valley and mountain. Not that one moment you are a mountain, and then you say, okay, now I'm just going to be still.

Now I'm the valley, and then the phone rings, and then I'm the mountain, and the, your bank manager says, what about your, your account is overdrawn by, what? In the grip of a fearful reaction, emotion, thought, and then shouting and, no, you need to, the two need to be there at the same time, rather than fluctuating between being trapped in the world of illusion and then going into meditation once a day. But don't disturb me.

Don't move the furniture. It has to be here. Okay, now I can be at peace.

And of course, sooner or later, usually sooner, something happens to disturb you, a drill starts up next door. So the art of living, the supreme art is to embody simultaneously the relative and the absolute in yourself. And that is the purpose of life.

The purpose, while you're here, and I don't mean in this room, but here on this planet, here as this human form, short-lived, the purpose is this, to live this state of perfection where heaven and earth, one could say, come together, earth being the world of form and heaven the formless, to use those terms, to embody that. And that is your practice. And where do you practice?

You practice every moment, and you use your daily life to see if you can be spacious while you're engaged in the world. Spacious means the valley. So that's it.

And still not lose the ability to be engaged in the world. One could almost say it's a tightrope. We are walking.

Now, when we talk about being present, that means of course to have the awareness of space, not so much the awareness of space, space and awareness are the same thing, in

yourself, to be aware of that dimension in yourself, that is presence. Presence is consciousness, but no conceptual thinking. The space of consciousness to be that right now, right now, this moment.

Now, you are that. It is the very light in which all this is perceived. It is essentially who you are.

It is formless. That's the valley. And so as you listen to these words, there's a space in you, and you can't do much with it.

You can't know it as an object of knowledge. I, oh, there's the space. I've got it now.

Of course you can't, because you are it. It is always subject. It can never be an object.

In that sense, you cannot know yourself. You can only be yourself. You can know everything else.

You can know all the things that make up the mountain through psychoanalysis or whatever method, introspection, regression therapy, remembering your past, past lifetimes and so on and so on. You can know all kinds of things about the form identity, that what makes up the form identity. You cannot know what lies beyond, behind that, because you can only be it.

It is the eternal subject. It is that through which everything is known. Consciousness itself, the light of consciousness, the eternal, the universe, the unmanifested which underlies the universe, through this form, wakes up to its own nature.

Knows itself, self, but not as subject, object, as self-knowing, which is a state of not-knowing, called a conceptual viewpoint. So in the practical realm, it is therefore vital that you have space in yourself. Be aware of space in yourself.

Stillness or space, just two different pointers to the same thing, no thing. At this moment, at this moment, is there space in you? Now if you're not bored, when you listen to these words, there is space in you.

So don't try to figure out, don't try to figure out whether or not there is space in me through the mind, say, okay, let's see, how do I know whether there is space in me? A very simple criterion to use is if you are not bored or angry right now, or irritated, there is space in you. The dimension is there.

That's because it's only from there that you can sit here and not be bored, or irritated, or angry. Now if you are bored, or irritated, or angry, you can either walk out and be irritated, bored, and angry somewhere else, or even there, you can say, oh, I feel bored, irritated, angry, and who knows that? How do you know that?

Well, I'm aware that I am bored, or irritated, or angry. So are you the boredom, the

anger, or the irritation, or are you the awareness of the boredom, the anger, or the irritation? So I'm giving you another chance.

So before you walk out, you can try that. Now, I assume that most of you are not bored, irritated, or angry from sensing the energy field, and so there's the... Why are you not bored, irritated, or angry?

Because there is a stillness or space in you now. Oh, and you haven't disappeared as a form identity. You're still sitting there in the chair.

Yes, there's a body. There may even be occasional thoughts, occasional in and out. And then again, under all of that is...

There may even be a little bit in your stomach that says, oh, I should have had breakfast. Am I picking up somebody's thought? I should have had breakfast, other than I wouldn't be hungry now.

Okay. And again, the stillness underneath it and between it. And so your life then is continuously a movement of being there as a form identity, but knowing yourself essentially as the space.

Then you are free from being trapped in the form and making your life a misery. Because no matter how hard you try and what you do, you can do all the right things. But if the valley is missing in your life, then the most vital dimension is missing from your life.

And no matter how conscientious you are and do all the right things and are tidy and very... Logically and maybe you have a life plan for the next 15 years. For every year, you know what you want to do.

Nothing wrong with that. And you'll still be creating misery. Because no matter how hard you try, if that vital dimension is missing, your life is one dimensional.

And then even the greatest success, who knows, one or two of you, in three, four years' time or five years' time, maybe we're reading about you in People magazine. And there are worse magazines than People. People is actually...

People is not so negative. There are many others who love talking negatively. And then you taste what success is like and fame.

Now, am I saying don't seek success? No. The beautiful thing is you can still play in the world of form.

And you play more beautifully when you realize it is only a relative truth. And anything that you achieve as this mountain is only relatively true and valid. And it'll come to an end.

And everything you achieve as a mountain will have its other side to it. Everything you lose, there's loss and gain. There's always the interplay.

You may gain many things and they will produce their own challenges. And you'll see the other part of success. And so no matter what you do, you will never for long find that now your life is actually great.

It's working. It's all working now. That on the form level never really happens for very long.

But that doesn't matter when you're in touch with the formless. However, I'm not saying that if you're in touch with the valley that it does not affect the world of form. It does.

You will notice that first of all, the sense of heaviness and seriousness, which is ultimately fear, goes out of your life. And when you're no longer dealing with situations and people from that place of seriousness and heaviness and ultimately anxiety and fear, then the world that you experience, the world that you experience or what you experience as the world changes. Because a different quality flows out.

It is that quality that comes from the unmanifested. So there tends to be a great improvement in the way in which you experience the world because you experience in a more gentle way. Even the so-called problems are experienced in a more, because you are not giving them that, you're not feeding the so-called problems with your reactivity and your heaviness and your fear.

Because the more fear you bring to the challenges, the greater the challenges become or the so-called problems become through your reaction. And it's only from the place of being the valley that you can be in a state of non-reaction when challenges arise in the form of people or situations. People can be very challenging.

Situations can be challenging. But if every challenge brings out the fear, you cannot be without fear as long as you identify it with the mountain because you want to survive as this thing that fear only goes when you're in touch with the space. And then you don't need to react.

Respond when necessary, yes. React, no. And many problems are dissolved when you simply don't react because quite often there's nothing much you can do.

Anything you do, in many cases, not all, sometimes action is required. But in many cases, anything you do, you only add to the problem. I had, when my mother was getting old, she was, I tried to open her a little to this essential truth.

But she had a few glimpses and that was good. But on the whole, she just could not let go of complete identification with her form identity. And I remember when she was 84, 85, she died when she was 86.

She called me every day and complaining about, of course, her body was failing, her eyesight was failing. And she was, it wasn't so much a problem of the physical, it was a problem of the mind saying, what's going to happen to me? And what's the fear that came up?

And always she said, what do I do? What do I do? And I couldn't eliminate from her mind the word do.

Especially Western people are conditioned to believe that everything has a doing solution to it. Everything, every problem, you have to continue to do something about it to solve it. The slightest, slightest irritation, what can we do about this?

And many things, of course, some things, yes, require action, but many other things require bringing a different state of consciousness to the situation rather than doing. They do it to their own bodies. The slightest, the slightest thing, they run to the doctor.

I'm not saying don't go to the doctor, no. But the slightest thing, oh, okay, I'll give you a pill, you're doing something against it. There's a little pain here, do something.

And so a few times I said to my mother, there's nothing to do. Just accept this moment as it is. And also she believed it was her personal problem that she was afflicted by this disease called old age.

And she had been singled out by destiny. And I tried to explain, no, it is a human, it is a human condition. Why to me?

Why does this happen to me? It's called old age. What do I do?

Nothing. So the obsession with doing, and again, I have to emphasize, I'm not saying never do anything again, no. But the obsession with doing that is part of this dimension of me and believing that if you only do enough, eventually everything will be sorted out in this world.

Every situation in your life will be sorted out. You just have to do, do here, do, do, do, and finally you can sit there and say, I've done it all. So there's doing and there's silence, stillness, the two.

This is another way of saying the two dimensions, the outgoing and the ingoing. The outgoing into doing and creating and manifesting, and the ingoing, which is the return to where it all started, the source, or the oneness, out of which the whole phenomenal show, we're in L.A., so we call it show, the whole show started, and into which, when the show is over, falls back, and then maybe another show continues. Now, again, instead of relinquishing all doing, which perhaps is recommended by a few yogis, you can try that too, do and be, I'm using a different pointer now to point to the same reality, do and be at the same time.

If you cannot do and be, now what do I mean by be? By be I mean a background of space, stillness, awareness, while you do here. Don't lose yourself in doing, that's really what, so that doing does not take you over.

For many people, it's not that they do things, the doing has taken them over. It's an energy field, an energy stream, which includes thinking, part of that energy stream of doing, because thinking is a form of doing, a primordial form of doing. They have been taken over by a collective energy stream of doing, which includes thinking.

What do I have to do now? And, of course, because they are lost in doing, with a vital dimension missing, they are unaware of, they are only aware of this, and unaware of that, so they are dancing around the surface of life in doing, not knowing that underneath there's a vastness of power and aliveness and energy that has nothing to do with doing, it's primordial energy, intelligence itself is there, but you don't know that, and you're trying to find little crumbs on the surface, like my dog, except, of course, that the dog is in touch with, but doesn't know it, but he is, she is, but you know how dogs are looking always for where's the next thing to eat, and sometimes they go around like in the most unlikely places, suddenly the dog is chewing something. What do they find? They always find in the corner, in the elevator, in the corner, she finds something to eat.

What's there to eat in the elevator, but she's crunching something, and in the same way, the humans, they go around looking for what's the next thing I need to do to feel a little bit better, to solve the problems, and anxious. For a dog it's simple, it's just concerned about the next bit of food, but for humans that primordial desire is multiplied into hundreds of things, but it's the same. So they go around to the surface of life, not knowing what they're missing.

You know that expression, you don't know what you're missing. You're missing the vastness underneath the surface of life. It's just in you, but in you and in the universe, you are a microcosm of the universe, so that the vastness, that power is in you, and if you could get in touch with it, it might even flow into what you are doing and change it.

So your doing could perhaps become empowered by an intelligence that is greater than the limited noisy mind that says, I need, I want, I must have, and then all the doing is designed to get you what you must have and what you need and what you want. But perhaps there can be a different kind of doing that flows from a much deeper place, but you have to be open to that dimension. Ah, and so then you go around your life being and doing, being, not alternative, alternately, but at the same time, while you're doing, you do, you be.

That's the two dimensions active in you, but you don't need to do all the time anymore. That's the beautiful thing. You're freed from the compulsion to do, which creates a lot of mischief and trouble, because at least 50% of what you do in the delusional state is not only unnecessary, but counterproductive.

All it does, it creates problems. And the so-called improvements that very often people come up with, every improvement creates another set of problems. Now you have to solve those.

It's the same with many medicines. You take this medicine, but then you need to take that one because it has side effects. Now to counteract the side effects, you need to take that one.

So instead of withdrawing into the valley, in the Tao Te Ching, there's a beautiful expression, the valley spirit. The valley spirit is the dimension of the Tao, the unmanifested, the very life, the formless life underneath the world of form, the source of it all, which pervades everything, formless, timeless in you now. That's the practice then is not lose touch with that when you do, which includes thinking.

And that's the big challenge, because it's when the stream of thinking takes you over, you're completely one-dimensional. And you have all experienced being taken over by a stream of thinking. It could even happen while you sit here, when you lose connection with the stillness underneath, and suddenly you don't hear the words anymore or they don't make sense anymore.

Valley spirit. What do I do to get there? Tell us what to do.

Give us a technique or a program, a five-year program. Twenty-five steps to get there. To not doing.

A 15-year course at the end of which you will find yourself. So you've all experienced being taken over by a stream of thinking and losing yourself in it and not only that, you probably still occasionally do experience it. Now you can, when you're really, when you've really been taken over by a stream of thinking, you don't even know of course that you've been taken over by a stream of thinking.

That's the problem. You don't even know that you've been taken over, because now if you know that you've been taken over by a stream of thinking, you're not 100% taken over by a stream of thinking, because one part of you knows, oh, I'm completely stuck in my mind. How do you know that?

Well, you're not totally stuck in your mind. And if you know that, okay, your mind is just not stopping, it's not wanting, okay, at least you know that. If you know that, you have a choice of stopping.

Well, how do I do that? The answer is stop doing, which means stop thinking. Well, how do I stop thinking?

Maybe that's the wrong approach, because if I say stop thinking, it may lead to a big problem in yourself, because I can't do it. Now, I'll give one little hint for people who can

stop thinking and another little hint for people who as yet cannot stop thinking or believe they can't stop thinking. Some of you already are able to stop thinking unless you're really in turmoil.

Let's practice it when nothing, you're not being challenged by life. Don't wait for a big challenge when you're in turmoil and say, oh, I must stop thinking, but I can't. When nothing is going wrong for a while, can you stop thinking when you're not being challenged by life?

Don't wait for a challenge when the doctor says, he may be wrong by the way, but when he says, okay, you have six more months and then that'll be it. Of course, that's a great opportunity to stop thinking and doing and future and all that, but don't wait for that. It's probably easier to do it then than when you believe that you have another 30 years to go, because then you have time, okay, I'll stop thinking in a little while, but first I need to solve my problems.

Some of you can already by a simple, not willpower, by a simple decision say, I don't want to think now. I'm letting go of thinking now. You can stop your mind, but that's not a doing.

You can relinquish thought, so it's not really a doing. Now, you might ask, especially if you're interested in certain spiritual philosophies like Advaita, non-duality, well, who is doing the stopping? Who is stopping to think and who can decide to stop thinking if you are ultimately an illusion and it gets very complicated?

The fact is, if you're able to choose presence, which is what it is, say, okay, I choose to be present now instead of to think. Instead of thinking, just alert spaciousness, no tension, relaxed alertness, relaxed alertness. You can choose that.

Some of you, don't know how many, many times I recommend during the day say, okay, there's nothing to think about. Every time you stop at a traffic light, why think? Look, be.

Why think about your problems while you're stopped at the traffic light? There's nothing you can do. Be.

So you can be the valley while you're there and then you go on. It's amazing if you try to practice with that, just go into not thinking. What that means is when we say you can choose not to think, what is really happening is presence is choosing to come through this form into this world.

But from our relative perspective, it looks as if there was a person stopping thinking and choosing to be present. And that's a beautiful thing. If you have that ability and then you practice with that in daily life.

For example, you don't think when you listen to somebody. Be there as an alert stillness

rather than reactive entity, which means a valley again. When you listen to another human being on the phone or in person, are you there as a reactive entity, valley?

What's he trying to do? Working out all kinds of things. Or can you be there as a spacious presence while you listen?

Completely different energy comes in when you're there as a spacious presence every time you listen to somebody. And of course, you do that a lot every day. Of course, everybody does it every day.

You listen to people and you can listen as the valley spirit rather than as the limited entity, the mountain that needs and wants something and protects itself and has schemes. So it's not connected to a deeper intelligence. It's only when you can be there as the alert presence, a deeper intelligence comes into this world, which is the unconditioned consciousness through you.

And then the interaction is fresh, new and always, no matter what the interaction is about when you're listening to another human being and there is the presence, there is something there in that interaction that is more important than what is being talked about. That means you are not lost in doing because what is being talked about, whether it's a business deal or exchange of information or you know what happened, let me tell you what happened. Okay, some story that they're telling you, whatever it is that they're talking about or there's something else present and that connects you with the other human being.

Because if you're only on the level of words when there's an exchange, you're not really connected to the human as a being. You're only connected to the human but not the being. The human is a form.

The being is a formless. You are a human being, which means you are form and formless in one. But the being is the essence of who you are.

The human is a temporary form, the relative truth, which you are stuck with for a little while. It doesn't matter. The relative truth and the absolute, the human being.

Now if there's only the human in any interaction, I wrote about that briefly in A New Earth, talking about children, how you listen to children, how you respond to children. If there's only the human, then the deeper dimension is missing and it's very, children even get angry after a while with their parents and the parents don't know why they're angry because you are not there as the being in yourself and you don't acknowledge their being if everything is on the level of doing. Do this, have you done that?

Now you need to do this. Let's do that. That's, if you can bring in being into the interaction, it might even, usually when I go to places like, let's say, talking to somebody about some administrative stuff, this or that, whatever it may be, the bank manager, all

kinds of information, inquiring about this or that, always come from, yes, you talk about what you need to know, you ask questions, and then usually after I feel the impulse after what we've spoken about, we've come to the end of it, usually I connect, I feel the impulse to ask some personal question.

It comes from within, I can't leave that human being without, because I've already connected on the level of being, realizing that whatever role people play in the world of doing is only relatively true, it's not who they are. So if you think there's a waiter delivering the meal to your hotel room, it's not a waiter, it's just this being is playing this role temporarily, and you are not a client in the hotel, it's absurd to say I am a client in this hotel, you're not, it's ridiculous. So can you connect with, feel the formless both in yourself, first you have to feel it in yourself, the spaciousness, and then you can feel it in the other, then you don't believe that there is some absolute truth that this person is a waiter, he's not a waiter.

So it's a wonderful thing when suddenly there's a connection that is deeper than the relative world of form with the other human being, and it's there because that's the being underneath the form, but you have to be still for a moment when you look at that other human being, you have to be still for a moment and look, and in that stillness you sense your own being, the spaciousness, the stillness, and then you can penetrate through the form in the other and feel it, the same being in the other, and you have transcended role playing and you've transcended being trapped in form identities, your own form identity and somebody else's form identity, and you still can function in the world of form, but you don't completely believe in it anymore, and when you don't completely believe in it anymore you function much better. It's the way, and people love you. Suddenly people say, oh, here she is, she's so nice.

What is so nice about him or her? Well, they don't know the answer. They feel somehow that something in them is acknowledged by you, and when they feel that something within them is acknowledged, and that which is acknowledged, of course, transcends the form, when they feel their essence is acknowledged, the essence loves you, so you become very popular, and people won't know why they love you.

They just say, oh, he's such a nice person, and that's fine. You don't need to explain, and if you can, a side, a byproduct, a side benefit of this would be, of course, that if you are engaged in some business, the more people like you, the more they will come to you with their business, but that's another matter. It's just a benefit that is secondary.

Also, you don't, if you're in negotiations with another person about this or that, you're not excessively focused on the outcome. You're focused on the presence now, which is fulfilling in itself, to be there as presence and feel the presence in the other is fulfilling in itself. The outcome, you don't need the outcome to feel better about yourself or the relationship, and then, of course, the outcome is much more likely to be positive from

the limited viewpoint of your business.

That's not why you do it. It's not a means to an end. It's not a doing anyway.

It's only when we talk about it in language, it becomes a doing, so it's wonderful practice. That's your practice. It doesn't matter where you practice, wherever you are in your life, you practice.

Every situation, every moment is the two dimensions, and that's the end of fear comes with that, fear being a normal human condition for most people, sometimes buried under something else, fear in its many manifestations, nervousness, tension, anxiety, anger really comes out of fear, stress really is a form of fear, all many forms of fear, quite normal. Why? That's all you know.

It's fear. You don't know that. You don't know that.

Once you know that also, it's the end of fear because there nothing can be destroyed. That's why the Course in Miracles starts, which is all you need to know, the prologue, the first before it all starts. It says, this course can be summarized in the following words, nothing real can be threatened, nothing unreal exists.

Herein lies the peace of God. Nothing real can be threatened, and that is here because nothing unreal ultimately exists in the world of form. The form is ultimately not real in itself.

Nothing unreal exists. Herein, which means knowing that, lies the peace of God. God, of course, is the formless, timeless, eternal, unmanifested that is both within and beyond the world.

Some of you, as I mentioned earlier, are able to step out of their mind, and you can practice that through a conscious choice. Be present. Nothing to think about right now, just be present.

You don't carry your history with you when you are present. Your life situation, I use that word in Power of Now, very important. Your life situation, everybody has one, past, future, relationships, job, health, finances, where you live, what happens to you, what you do, and all your life situation.

You have a life, you're here with, you have a life situation, of course you do, but you also have, it's not that you have a life, you are life itself. When your life situation is all you know about yourself, which is another way of putting, that's all you know, then you miss life. Now, you're very good at dealing with your life situation, but you miss life.

You do all the right things, but it never really gets you anywhere because you miss life. Life is now, and life is not in the doing. Life is in the being now.

Step out of thinking into alert stillness, if you can, and also another way is not to completely believe in every thought that comes into your head. Realize it's a thought, it's a position, it's a judgment, not completely identified with it. It's a story that you are telling yourself.

It's amazing how many stories people tell themselves in their head. Many are completely distorted. It's not the reality, it's the thought.

It's the stories, how you see the reality. The reality usually is much more simple and more benign than the story. One of the early lessons in A Course in Miracles says you're supposed to look at things around you in the room and say, nothing that I see in this room means anything.

This table doesn't mean anything. This glass doesn't mean anything. This hand doesn't mean anything.

This floor doesn't mean anything. Now, what does that lesson mean? It doesn't mean anything.

What it means is it's attempting to erase the continuous conceptualization of reality, like scribbles on a blackboard, because whatever you think it means is a concept in your mind. If you deny the continuous and compulsive conceptualization of reality, it's like erasing the conditioning of your mind. Coming to the place where the Dalai Lama is, don't know.

This lesson in A Course in Miracles, all it's teaching is to come to the place of spacious emptiness, alertness, no longer trapped in the world in conceptual thinking. It doesn't mean anything. Of course, that's another.

You're moving into a different dimension. By living in this way, you inhabit, suddenly life opens up, and all the narrowness that the mind had imposed on it dissolves, and life becomes spacious, because you found the space within. There's suddenly a spaciousness to life, not a threatening place anymore.

What's life going to do? Where's my next threat coming from? Again, the same thing, for example, there's an entire spiritual teaching based on denying the reality of your story, and Byron Katie's teachings is based on the simple fact of denying your story.

How do I know? Do I really know that this is true? No, I can't really know that.

So it takes you to the same place where the Dalai Lama is, don't know. So it's a wonderful thing. You can enter that not knowing, but it's only not knowing from the viewpoint of the conceptual mind.

You're actually connected with a deeper intelligence, unconditioned, and if you really

need to know something, it comes, but it comes out of the spaciousness of not knowing. Well, it's a little bit like jumping off a cliff and then seeing if you can fly. To the ego, it's a little bit like that.

The ego says, don't go there, because the ego has worked it all out. It explains the whole, it has its philosophy of life. It might be very defective, limiting philosophy, but it has some kind of philosophy of life.

Every person has their story through which they interpret reality, and usually it's not a pleasant work of fiction, but at least you think you know. It gives you some illusory foothold, and of course the ego thinks, if I let go of that, I won't know anything anymore, which in a way is true, but not completely true. In a deeper sense, it's you only let go of a distortion of reality created by the conditioned mind, which is part of the collective human mind in its present state of evolution, and so the collective mind of which your mind is part has created this human-made world, which is full of problems, and they seem to be, they pop out one after another.

When you think one economy, and then it's that, and then it's that, another war. A little spiritual practice I recommend is to go to a public place, like a cafe, or wherever you can sit, or out in the park, and watch humans, people, people who are in the park, people watching. The only difference between ordinary people watching and this kind of people watching is that your practice is not to attach any label or judgment on any human that you watch.

You allow them to be as they are, as they walk along or sit, whatever they do, and enjoy the incredible spectacle of the multiplicity of human forms. There is no good or bad or whatever, just allow them to be, and so the mind does not call them anything. You're there as an innocent observer.

It's a beautiful thing, it even does something to the energy field where you are, where you're sitting. It's something you bring in a different frequency, but that's a secondary thing. Don't start thinking, I'm here to bring in a different frequency.

Just be there as an alert watcher. It's, you begin to love other humans, which for some people is a hard thing. It's easy to love a dog.

Well, it's easier to love a dog than a human, usually, because the dog has, there's no mind in the way. Dog doesn't judge you, or the dog has unconditional love, tails wagging. It's a dog, tails wagging.

It's easy to love a creature like that, but the humans are different. Who are you? What do you want?

What does he want from me? So that's a beautiful practice, and the next step up, of course, is to watch people that you know very well in the same way, when they are

moving wherever you are at home or whatever, where there's a lot of past that you share, and then be present, even with people with whom you share a lot of past, but your first practice is with strangers, so to speak, with whom you don't share a lot of past. Next step up is you practice with relatives, friends, family.

Just spend little moments when you just, you watch them, without wanting anything. Do it with your children, without saying, you should be doing this, why are you doing that? Just what?

You can also say, yes, brush your teeth, that's fine, but what? Beautiful. So that's incorporating awareness practice into everyday life, and it's so enjoyable.

It's such great joy. I've been doing it for many years, people watching. You love everybody, no matter what they look like, because it's all, the human form expressing itself in so many different ways.

Of course then, maybe people, by the way, it's less likely that people will even notice you when you're in that still presence watching. You don't, you very rarely actually attract attention to you, which, maybe to the ego that's not such a great thing, but, well, some egos are uneasy with attention, it's a reverted thing, anyway. Well, there are two egoic states.

One is to want to be seen, and the other egoic state is to be afraid of being seen. Two faces of the ego. The ego may say, okay, I go to a place where people watch other people, and so, I used to, a long, long time ago, a long time ago, I lived in Spain, it was in the late, middle 60s, as a teenager, and this has changed now, but at the time, every Saturday evening, there was a cafes along the main avenue, one cafe, outdoor cafe after another, and every Saturday evening, all the people would dress up in their best clothes, and just walk up and down, and up and down, and some people would be sitting in the cafes watching the people walking up and down, and then the people walking in turn would sit there and watch the others walk up and down. It was the most enjoyable activity for a Saturday night. It has changed now.

They don't dress up anymore, but that's an egoic activity, is wanting to be seen, and the reverse of that is being scared of being seen. I hope that nobody's looking at me. That's ego, too.

In a conventional task, we think of ego as somebody who says, look at me, but the other is equally ego, just as strong, the shy one. So it's going beyond both, and just, if people are looking, then again, if you're not there as a thinking person, you're there as presence, it doesn't matter if they're looking. It doesn't add anything to who you are, or doesn't detract anything from who you are.

Even the attention of 100 people doesn't add anything to who you are in truth. To the

ego, it could be a great thing. It loves, many egos love attention, except those who fear attention.

So if you are in a position where people are looking at you, again, to be still and present, you go beyond both the timidity of not wanting to be seen, or the pride of, oh, they're all looking at me. Ego is narcissus, is the image of who you are in your mind, which gets reinforced by others. It's a phantom.

Welcome. There are at least two reasons, maybe more, why we always start with stillness. One is that I love stillness, and the second reason is that I don't know what I'm going to say.

Now, sitting in front of an audience and not knowing what to say could be a nightmare. If I thought I should know what to say. But it's not a nightmare if I am comfortable with not knowing what to say.

Then it's actually quite pleasant. And that is the state of consciousness in which conceptual thinking is not that important anymore. You may have heard the story of the disciple who asked the Zen master, or rather the Zen master asked the disciple in the usual Zen way, which can sometimes seem a little bit abrupt.

The master asked, do you understand Zen? And the disciple said, no, master, I don't. And the master said, neither do I.

And here you can see the two different modalities of not knowing. The disciple's not knowing, and the master's not knowing. Now, as you sit here, you can be either a disciple or a master listening to yourself.

There's content, the content of your mind, which consists of thoughts. And most people have the need to fill up their mind and their life with more content. It's a compulsion, almost an addictive searching for more stuff to identify with so that you can increase the content of things that the mind identifies with.

So most people carry around content in the mind in the form of thoughts, bundles of thoughts that contain a sense of self that you identify with, or in the words of Don Miguel Ruiz, that you have faith in, and that's all they know. Their life consists of content, both externally, one could say, everything absorbs their attention continuously, stuff, things, things to acquire, things to be worried about, things to do, problems, and thoughts, one after another. You have to think about this and this and this continuously.

So your entire inner space is filled up with content, no breathing room, a room full of stuff. And that's the self, there's a self-identification with stuff, which ultimately is the mind, thought stuff, and you feel you're choking to death almost, life is experienced as frustrating and bringing up one dilemma after another. So the essence of our gathering here is to find the inner space that is there, although you may have accumulated a lot of

content in your mind, there is always behind it or underneath it the vastness of inner space or stillness.

Even in the most nervous and irritated and hyperactive human mind, even there underneath, there is a dimension of stillness. You just have to look for it, to feel it, to sense it within yourself, underneath all the stream of thinking, and the stillness is the gap between two thoughts, for example, right now. What I'm saying right now is not that important.

All the words I'm using are pointing to the gaps. I could be telling you fascinating stories, but sometimes I do. But here all the words are really pointing to the gaps, to the space behind the words or in between the words.

And I'm directing your attention to the space within, becoming aware of it. And we're saying that because we're using language. It's not so much that you become aware of the space or that you become aware of the stillness.

You are that. There isn't really a duality there anymore. Awareness becomes aware of itself.

Consciousness is conscious of itself. When we use language, immediately we create a subject and an object and we say, I am aware of stillness. But if you go into it more deeply, you realize that the ultimate I and stillness are one and the same, and you become still.

There's just a presence there. It's not you are aware of the presence. You are the presence.

And that liberates you from the stuff in your mind, the accumulation of content. It's a wonderful realization to realize suddenly that there is a vast dimension of peace inside you, no matter how mad the content in your mind may be when it gets activated. One way of putting it is on the one hand, usually you're always conscious of something.

There is the consciousness flows into a form, sense perceptions. And then of course, thoughts arise and immediately label the sense perceptions. Consciousness becomes a thought, feelings, emotions may arise.

You're concerned with all kinds of things. There's always consciousness goes into this and that and that. Something to look at, something to think about.

Of course, there's never a clear looking because you're always looking through this veil of thinking. Well, we are beginning to step out of that. But can you be aware of the simple fact that you are conscious at this moment?

So when we put that into language, one could say, you are becoming conscious that you

are conscious. And that's this enormous aliveness in that, but it's peaceful. It's this deep peace in that aliveness, not the nervous aliveness of, in the ordinary state of consciousness when peaceful is associated with sleepiness, but it doesn't have to be like that.

There is a peace in you that is vibrantly alive, a stillness that's vibrantly alive. If you don't find that, you've missed the most important thing in your life. That's the pearl of great price that is mentioned in the New Testament, the pearl of great price, the one thing that matters, everything else secondary, finding that dimension in yourself.

Not, and you can't find it at some future point, once your life situation gets a little better, once your problems are solved, no. That dimension is absolutely one with what we call the now. In fact, we could say it is the now itself, the formless now.

The now that is ever present, this place in which everything appears, you are that. So beyond the person with its problems, there is something much vaster in you. And if you don't find that, no matter what you do on the level of the person, you always find frustration again and some form of suffering, no matter how you rearrange your life on that level of the personality.

And if you find that dimension, then it changes the entire way in which you experience your life. One thing it does is you realize that everything in your life that you thought was so important, is not that important. It's only relatively important.

So the seriousness goes out of your life about me and my problems. And many people walk around with a heavy burden of that. Burdened by their stuff.

Burdened by their life. Burdened by their past. And when you look at them, there's just a very dim light that shines through their stuff.

And mostly what's looking back at you is their stuff. So everything is filtered through the stuff in their minds, which is the conditioning, the past inside them, the thought structure. And everything is immediately distorted.

Whatever, every person you meet, this gets distorted. Every situation you go into gets distorted by that. Because you're looking at it through the filter of all that.

The me, heavy, the me personality, the heaviness of that. The density, the density of that. And nobody, well there are some now, but in the mainstream culture, nobody teaches you that simple thing, that there is a dimension in you that frees you from all that.

At school, nobody has ever heard of it, it seems. Well, in the mainstream culture, now there's a big movement coming in where people are waking up to that. Because that's what it is.

Waking up. Awakening. A term that's been used for thousands of years already in spirituality.

Awakening. The Buddha is the one who is awake. That's what the word means.

So, of course, ordinarily people think they're all awake already. But if you look, then you see they're not awake. They're in the dream world of incessant and compulsive thinking.

So the most wonderful thing then is to wake up and realize who or what you are beyond that accumulation. And then, of course, the mind expects some kind of answer. Okay, now tell me who or what I am beyond that.

But the strange thing is you can't conceptualize that. It's a state of not knowing. Let's go into that.

There is such a term in spirituality as self-realization. And ordinarily people would think that then you really, you truly know who you are. And there's some kind of miraculous revelation that then tells you who you are.

It is true that there is a miraculous revelation, but it's not conceptual. So the awakening from the point of view of the conceptual mind is a state of not knowing anymore who you are. Because everybody else knows who they are through conceptual concepts.

Can you embrace the state of simple, aware presence without needing to know anything about yourself, but being that consciously? Being who you are rather than knowing who you are. Being the consciousness.

And that's the state of not knowing from the point of view of the mind. This is what Zen talks about. No mind, it says.

The no mind no, or it talks about beginner's mind. Now the beginner doesn't know yet. The beginner looks and doesn't know.

It's free of preconceived ideas and concepts. So the beginner's mind is that. And that's not only the beginner's mind.

It's also the wisdom, the wise person's mind. Socrates said, all I know for sure is that I don't know. And that's what the wisdom.

All the other philosophers, they were identified with the stuff in their mind. They thought they knew all the answers, all on a conceptual level. Socrates had the wisdom to, because that is the wisdom is to embrace the dimension that is deeper than concepts in yourself, deeper than judgments, deeper than thoughts.

And from there, you don't, you have no knowledge, which is conceptual. There is a depth there, which almost looks like ignorance from the point of view of the conceptual mind.

And yet there's a deep knowing in there.

And as that arises in your life, you walk around the world in that state of innocence. One could almost say, not the original innocence that is there before all that mental stuff starts, but a regained innocence, which is also innocence, but has a depth to it that the original innocence perhaps does not yet have, because when it's, that's your natural state. You don't even know it, but when you've been through all the delusion and then return to the natural state, there's a knowing there, an added depth to that.

So the transformation of consciousness then means that you, as you go through life more and more, the, the still alert presence that you are, operates when you perceive things, you perceive through the still presence. That's the innocence. That's the original, sometimes in some Indian teachings it's called the natural state.

That is also what in other Indian teachings is called the force state. One, this one state is the normal wakeful state, which is really a state of sleep. Then there's the state of dreamlike, normal dream, and there's dreamless sleep.

So we have dreamless sleep, the normal dream state, conventional dream state, and the normal wakeful state, which is another form of dream. And then you have the turiya, which means the fourth. It is the fourth state of consciousness.

And that is the possibility of being in a state that compared to the normal wakeful state, compared to which the normal wakeful state is a state of sleep. That is a state of clear alert presence where the unconditioned emerges through you. And that is happening now on the planet to growing number of humans.

And that changes everything. It frees you from the delusion that all you are is the accumulation of stuff in your mind. And the identification with that, and the knowledge which creates a false and absurdly limited sense of self.

And all kinds of problems that this absurdly limited sense of self creates wherever it goes. And that absurdly limited sense of self is never at ease, not for long. Never content, not for long.

Briefly sometimes a desire has just been met. It just got something, so some new illusion. Ah!

And the next day or a week later, oh, he was supposed to make me happy, but he made me unhappy. Or she, or it, whatever it was. So that the absurdly limited sense of self, that is the identification with the conditioned mind.

And all the thoughts that continuously go through your head as the voice in the head. Which for most people is, they think they are that. They think they are the voice in the head.

So in the voice, they are the voice. And the voice speaks to you, speaks to you. They are asleep.

The voice is talking. They are talking in their dream. Their opinions regurgitate it all the time.

All the old stuff coming back up. And of course, that's what Jesus pointed to when he said, you must become as little children to enter the kingdom of heaven. And the little children, what is it?

They don't have yet the conceptual framework that they impose on the world through which they perceive everything. There's a clarity of perception there that is almost light. You can say it's light coming through them.

No, you can, that light is in you also. It just has been obscured by the stuff. And so you can perceive in the same way and even more deeply than the child, because it's a regained innocence of perception.

And you go through the world in that innocent state. As you walk along the street, you look around. People, no need to call them anything, to label them.

Trees, there's a sky, shop windows, cars, noise, it's all there. And there is the background to your sense perceptions is alert stillness. This is becoming a little child, but it's not a regression.

And that while you live in that in such a way, you are free, entirely free of the conditioned personality that causes you so much problems when you identify with it. You're free. So who are you then at that moment when you are just there as a field of perception?

You don't know who you are, but on a deeper level, there is a deep knowing, but you couldn't call it anything. Your life itself, your consciousness itself, whatever you want to call it. So you know that you are the background for all that.

You are the space for all that. And of course you can't space, you cannot conceptualize. It has no form.

There's no form. The essence of who you are has no form. That's the beauty of it.

And at first, perhaps for a while you're able to be the presence, and then you slip back into being the personality. And there's always a, you can notice then the immediate totally different energies takes you over. And the parasitical entity, the human mind, and then for, oh yeah, ooh, ooh.

There's the, you know the two images for theater, tragedy and comedy, the two masks that are symbols for theater, the comedies and the tragedy. And I saw a beautiful

cartoon some years ago in a spiritual magazine where there was a serene face looking a little bit like the Buddha, and with a slight smile, because the Buddha, all the good, the most powerful Buddha images have a very slight smile, or at least an emanation of that. There's a peace that comes through.

Now, and so this cartoon, this image was holding, in one hand was holding the mask of the tragedy, and in another hand was holding the mask of the comedy. So you have those two opposites, and behind it, the eternal peace, the unconditioned presence. And then if there should, even if there should be some tragedy or comedy in your life, you can still sense the peace underneath it, and you can cry if somebody close to you dies.

You can cry and still sense the peace underneath it. So the Buddha is smiling because of that. Just a hint of a smile.

It's very, an all-pervasive peace in the background, of your being in the background. And sometimes it may be so powerful that it becomes, it almost obliterates everything. And then it's just in the background as you go about your business.

Now you have to be careful when you start talking to people that your mindstream does not obliterate the awareness of presence, the awareness of awareness, or the awareness does not obliterate that. The moment you get into a mindstream, start talking, the mind comes in and pulls you. It wants you to go back into a complete identification with it.

So there, alertness is required, so that even when you have a discussion with someone, not to lose the stillness in the background. And one way of doing it is while you listen, be alert and still. When you listen to another person, alert and still.

Really listen. Rather than saying, oh, I don't want to think while you're listening. Because then you're not really listening.

Listening is a powerful thing. It can be a spiritual practice. You can listen to people, or easier of course is to listen to natural sounds.

It brings alert attention. And then you notice there's a sound, and behind the sound is the alert attention. Listening.

The most powerful thing is to listen to no sound at all, which is the silence. Wake up at two o'clock in the morning, suddenly it's all silent around you, and instead of going into thinking about your problems, you become aware of silence, and you listen to it. And immediately there's inner silence.

The moment you become aware of silence, you've become still. Just need to acknowledge it. And then you'll be surprised that you can actually acknowledge the silence even behind the sounds, even when there are sounds.

You go out into nature, there's birds, you can hear the leaves in the trees, water dripping, whatever it is. But underneath it all there's a silence. And then this happens inside you too.

There are thoughts. Underneath the thoughts there's silence. And then the thoughts separate, and there's just silence.

And then a few more thoughts may come, and then just silence. That is your practice, is to be that in daily life. Just the most wonderful things.

It doesn't really matter what you do in your daily life, whether what you do is regarded as fulfilling or not fulfilling. It's what is the energy that flows into what you do? What is the state of consciousness behind the doing?

So that's the practice. It's a gradual liberation from the personality, which is the conditioned self. In some cases it can be a sudden liberation.

That's more rare, but that can sometimes happen when you meet death, or the imminent death. And then survive. Or some kind of psychological death.

But don't need to wait for that. Die now. Here and now.

Die to the fictitious self in the head. You can do that now. Death.

Oh, death is not that bad, is it? In fact it's beautiful. Are you thinking at this moment?

Just a question. If you know that you're thinking, then there's some awareness there. It's only from the level of awareness you can know that you're thinking.

If you don't know that you're thinking, and you're just thinking, then it means you are dreaming. I'll give you just a little bit more space so that you can practice self-observation. Now, you may remember in *The Power of Now*, if you read it, I talked about a mouse that was, a cat watching a mouse hole, waiting for the mouse to come out.

Now, the cat watching the mouse hole, if you have observed a cat watching a mouse hole, is completely still. Can be still for a long, long time. It sits there.

That is probably the transcendent state for cats. Now, I'm asking in *The Power of Now*, can you do the same as the cat watching a mouse hole, by putting some attention inside you and seeing, okay, let's see what the next thought is that's going to come up. So the thought is a mouse.

You are the cat. Let's see what the next thought is that's going to come up. And if you're very alert, the mouse doesn't come.

It's not coming. You're so alert that the next thought isn't even coming. All you are is

presence.

And then at some point, probably there will be a decrease in your alertness and you go, what time is it? How much longer are we going to sit here? Or you remember your troubled life.

You suddenly remember you have problems. Not this moment, of course, but in your head. And then perhaps presence comes back, and you remember, oh.

And you become the cat again, watching the mouse hole. Interesting, the alertness, freedom from thinking through alert presence. And then thought comes back in.

And alert presence. Just knowing this is enough to bring about an awakening in your life, that there's the possibility of shift between levels of consciousness. Now, I haven't told this story in some years, so I'll tell it now, again.

The Zen master. There's a Zen master who used to teach. In only one way, he became famous, because he never gave any explanation.

Whenever he was asked, can you explain the meaning of Zen please? He would go, yes. Say, that was his teaching.

And he became famous for his teaching. In another version of this story, whether it's true or not, I don't know, but it may well be true. In the monastery where he lived, there was a young boy who was supposed to become a monk.

And the young boy would sometimes jokingly imitate the master, and he would go like this. And one day the master saw it. It was in the kitchen.

And it's a Zen story. The master got a knife and cut off his finger. And the boy, screaming, ran towards the door.

And the last moment, the master called his name, whatever his name was. And the master said, turn around. And then the master went.

And the story goes that at that moment, the boy had satori, a flash of enlightenment. Lost his finger, but got enlightenment. And the boy later became a fingerless, well, this finger was missing, teacher of Zen.

Attention, presence. But I don't know anything anymore when I'm present, says the mind. No precisely.

But there's wisdom. Out of that comes wisdom. Out of that come insights.

Out of that come realization. Out of that comes joy, aliveness, inner peace, creativity. Out of that, it all emerges.

Out of that, even a new and interesting thought can emerge out of that instead of the compulsive, repetitive thinking, the old records in your head. Suddenly you have an, ah, why did it come? Because there was the space of stillness.

Came out of that. Any creative solution, whatever, you have to access that. Or maybe nothing comes.

Beautiful. If nothing is needed, nothing comes. You just be there, feeling fulfilled, joyful, peaceful.

It's good enough. And then the rest of your life, you just, you still pretend that you are a person. That's fine.

You have your things, talk about. You can see a movie, go to a bar and have a drink. Well, until you're firmly established in presence, I recommend not to drink too much because then you quickly lose presence.

Once you're firmly established in presence, you might even be able to have a few glasses and not that I wouldn't, I don't enjoy more than one glass. I enjoy occasional glass of wine. That's fine.

There was a teacher who gave his disciples alcohol to drink to test their degree of presence. Can you still be present when you feel you're becoming dizzy in the head? That was Gurdjieff, the Russian teacher.

Can you still be present? Have another vodka. Well, I think it was Oprah who once said, silence doesn't look good on camera.

So you can always edit it out if necessary. But Oprah tried it for a minute and that seemed to work. Usually the belief is that you can't have silence on a TV screen, at least not these days.

When I was a child, there actually was silence. Well, there were only two days channels and often in between programs you would just see an image and sometimes some background music, image of a building or city or it said, we'll be back soon. And so the TV wouldn't draw you into continuous, what comes next, one exciting image after another each one lasting just a few seconds as it does these days.

But you could actually be still and look at the TV screen. And so perhaps here's another opportunity for doing that. And as you look at the stillness, become still inside, tune into the stillness, the most precious thing there is, your deepest identity is stillness.

If that gets covered up, then you don't really know who you are anymore. And then you look for yourself in all kinds of things without ever finding yourself until you regain what had always been there covered up by the noise, the stillness. Stillness is very patient.

Stillness is space, inner space. And it's as tolerant as outer space. It allows everything to be and it cannot be touched by anything, cannot be spoiled, only covered up.

So every human being, that's the amazing thing, has that dimension within no matter how insane they seem to be on the surface. Becoming comfortable with stillness also means becoming comfortable with yourself, the rare state for many human beings. And then you're able to be somewhere in your room, at home or outside in nature, wherever, without needing some kind of physical contact with the world or some kind of additional stimulus in your life, either some kind of excitement, nothing wrong with excitement, but you don't need it to give you a sense of aliveness anymore because the aliveness comes from a deeper place than any excitement could ever come from. And then you don't need drama to give you a sense that you're still alive. That's another form of excitement.

And you don't need to desensitize yourself to mental or emotional pain that is there when you're not in touch with that dimension within. And it's so close. It's just there's a mental noise or the emotional wave movement and underneath it there's a sea.

The sea or the lake is still. The deeper you go, the stiller it is. Now most people can only go there when they go to sleep.

So they go to a wonderful place but don't really know that they're there. They just derive life energy from it. They wake up again and perhaps if they're lucky, say, I had a good night's sleep, I feel so good.

I don't know if you have ever done this consciously and that is, well, we all have experienced being tired and some people regard that as a negative thing, but being tired, if you can bring some consciousness into being tired when you are tired, very tired, I'm not hypnotizing you, I hope nobody's going to sleep. And your eyes are getting heavier and heavier. When you are very tired, what people call tired, what is that actually?

What does it feel like? What is that? So if you can put some attention into being alert, this is almost a paradox, have some awareness to investigate what does it actually mean and what does it actually feel like to be very tired.

It feels like something from somewhere is pulling you and it almost says, come this way. It's like a magnetic pull. And the pull is very sweet.

The pull is a place of such wonderful sweetness and rest and peace that it becomes irresistible. And then people say, I can't keep my eyes open anymore. But really what that is, is something is pulling you away from this world and it's so precious.

And this is why when you finally go into bed and close your eyes and for the brief time span when you are very tired that you are still conscious, it's deeply, extremely enjoyable. You all experience how nice it is when you finally are very tired and finally you

lie down. All your problems are gone, forgotten.

You can't, there's no energy left to think about your problems. And so you're just moving towards that beautiful place and then you disappear in it. And it's, the pull is so powerful that even people who, there have been stories about people who were lost in the wilderness or lost out in the cold and snow and they got more and more tired.

And finally, although they knew if I lie down and close my eyes and go to sleep, I'm not going to wake up again, they did it anyway. Because the pull became so irresistible and the beauty and sweetness of going into sleep, so overpowering that they gave in and there was no fear. There's no fear of death.

They knew they were going to die but in that moment there was no fear of death anymore. There was just being pulled, giving in to that enormous pull. So that's the strange thing then for humans and other life forms on this planet is that every day or every night they drop unconscious.

The whole population, gone. It could be a science fiction story, you visit a planet and then suddenly the whole population drops, becomes unconscious and it's normal. And it's called Planet Earth.

So there's a really where you're moving to the source. Every human being and every life form that experiences sleep returns to the source, the unmanifested source and then comes back into the manifested, recharged. But it's an unconscious return movement.

It does not free you from suffering in this world of, the outer world of manifestation when you come back to it. The spiritual path is about finding that realm without losing yourself in it, realizing your essential identity with it and remain conscious. And that happens, for example, if you stop thinking without falling asleep.

At first you may not notice the same overpowering sweetness of being that you have that pulls you towards sleep. It's very subtle. At first there seems to be a kind of blank, empty space, but there's enormous power there to the mind that looks like nothing.

And that's why it's sometimes described as nothing or no thing or emptiness because the mind is used to noise. It's not really capable of grasping that it cannot be grasped. I sometimes compare it to stepping after you're spending several hours in a noisy discotheque, which is a metaphor here for normal existence.

You step out, close the door behind you and you find yourself, it's the middle of the night and you're out in nature somewhere. There are very subtle sounds and there's an all-pervasive silence, an alive silence around you. But because you're deafened by the noise, you cannot yet, it's too subtle for you to then perceive that.

So at first you go into a place that seems, oh, there's nothing here. So gradually you

become attuned to the inner stillness and realize its depth and its sweetness and its aliveness. I brought with me today a book.

We're just going to look at a few lines from that ancient book. This is our second session. We had at some previous point, we already had a session on the ancient Chinese book of wisdom, the Tao Te Ching, and this is our second session on the Tao Te Ching.

Something important to remember is we are not really studying a book. We are using the words of that book to look at our essential reality. We are not studying something outside ourselves.

And that applies whenever you read any book that is spiritually vitally alive. You're not studying. It's not an academic subject.

You're not studying a book. You're not absorbing information outside of yourself. You are, if it's a spiritual, true spiritual book, the book is about you.

Every true spiritual book is about the most essential dimension of who you are, rediscovering it, finding it, living from that dimension. That's what any spiritual book is about. And so somebody even called the Tao Te Ching that was written 2,500 years ago, the world's first self-help book.

Sometimes, these days, people speak dismissively about self-help books, and perhaps the reason is because there are so many and they are of such varying quality and depth, and inevitably there are always more self-help books or books of any kind that are not so powerful and not so deep, and relatively few that actually are vitally alive because they were written from that place within the author, which ultimately means they were written by consciousness itself. So there are always more false diamonds than real diamonds, of course.

And some books are mixed back. You have some beautiful insights and a lot of fluff in between. That's fine too.

It's sometimes worth reading a book just for the two pages. If you could summarize all the insights in some books, you could get it down to two pages. And that could change somebody's life, and that's fine.

If they had to read another 150 pages in the process, fine, at least they got that. But then you have some books that are almost undiluted with the system. What elsewhere is dispersed throughout a book.

Sometimes you get it in literature, you get deep insights occasionally. Every 30 pages you get one sentence that stands out and says, wow. And there are some books, however, that are the cream instead of skimmed milk.

And those are the books that are eternal, well, not eternal, but relatively speaking they survive for a very long time and they are beyond the particular culture out of which they came. Otherwise, how could a book written 2,500 years ago in China speak to us now? It's like something coming from a different planet, from a different galaxy.

But since it touches the deepest dimension of human existence, its essence is timeless. And that's why it's still alive, and that's why it's still read these days and valued, appreciated, and is helpful for many, many people. An amazing thing for a book to survive that long.

One miracle is that even its physical form survived for that long. And then to survive to be still not just of interest to some historians, but of vital significance to a human being. Amazing, miraculous thing.

2,500 years ago. And of course the same thing applies to the teaching of the Buddha, for example, which is still as vitally true and alive as it was about the same time, 2,500, 2,600 years ago. The author of the Tao Te Ching is Lao Tse, who lived about the same time, give or take 100 years, which isn't much, as the Buddha in India.

Lao Tse lived in China, the Buddha lived in India, as I pointed out already. So at that time, just a brief recapitulation, there was an enormous wave movement of spiritual awakening. Not as all-pervasive and powerful as it is now, but for that time it was an incredible thing, when at the same time period teachers arose in different parts of the planet and teach things.

And many people, relatively few, but still people responded to that. There was the Buddha in India, there was Mahavira in India, there was Zoroaster in Persia, there were the ancient Greek pre-Socratic philosophers, very deep insights in ancient Greece, all at the same time. It all happened virtually simultaneously.

And so this book then, Tao Te Ching, survived, and miraculously, of course, it has to get translated. How do you get that across from ancient Chinese symbols? How do you...and there are about a hundred translations into English available now. And sometimes you compare translations and you see, are they translating the same book? Is that the same text? So for the translator itself, now this is another important point, it's not only that the book, to be spiritually, vitally alive, needs to come from the deepest place.

When a book like that gets translated, even the translator needs to be attuned to the essential message of the book. And so many translations have been done of the Tao Te Ching, and all the translations that were done initially were done by academics at universities. They had great knowledge of Chinese language, but no attunement at all to the essential teaching.

And so you got many mistranslations of that, and only recently, relatively recently,

people came in who translated who had both knowledge of Chinese and, most importantly, inner attunement to the essential message of that. Tao Te Ching, a strange title, not to be confused, by the way, with the I Ching, which is another book, also Chinese, also interesting, but this is the Tao Te Ching. Tao has never been really successfully translated.

It doesn't lend itself to that. You need to keep that in Chinese. But even if you're Chinese, you won't be any wiser as to the meaning of Tao.

So even Chinese people don't have that advantage. When you talk of Tao, their mouth opens and you ask them, what does that really mean? They go, oh.

When I first heard of the Tao Te Ching and read it, that was a few years after a shift in consciousness, immediately I said, wow, yes, wow, wow. And then I asked my next-door neighbor at college, graduate school, he was Chinese, student of mathematics, I wanted to talk to him about the Tao Te Ching, and he said, what? Never heard of it.

Just very briefly, the Tao has also different shades of meaning, dimensions of meaning. On the one hand, the Tao is the is-ness of all things. Tao is the suchness, the is-ness of this moment as it is.

That's the Tao in its manifested aspect. The Tao is also the source, the unmanifested source, out of which the is-ness of all things emerges. So it's manifold meaning.

The Te, again, traditionally, that word Te is traditionally translated as virtue, which is not really a good thing anymore, since virtue is a relatively dead word. When was the last time you said virtue? Really, the Te refers to the flow.

Anybody who is in tune with the Tao is an expression of Te, which is right action, right living. Ethics comes into it, in the sense of virtue, but it's not something that needs to be learned externally, something that naturally comes from the source of life. When you're in tune with the Tao, the source of life, then all your actions and your speech are virtuous, which really means charged with the power of the Tao.

So Te really is power, the power of the Tao, the intelligence, the intelligent power of the Tao. When you're in tune with that, you don't need to think about ethics anymore, because then that flows naturally from the core of your being. In that sense, you can say virtue, but the closer translation actually would be power.

And if the book didn't already exist, a good translation for Tao Te Ching, I think, would be the power of now. Because Tao is inseparable from the present moment. Tao only is timeless presence.

There is no past or future in Tao. Let's look at a few lines. The translation, I have two translations here, one that I like very much, or version, Stephen Mitchell's version, and

another version is by Jane English and Jia Fu Feng.

They translated it together. But you may have others that are your favorites. You have to look around, whatever you respond to.

Now Stephen Mitchell, fortunately, does not exclusively use the masculine pronoun, as it's done in most other translations, he, the master, he varies between she and he. So sometimes the master is seen as feminine, and sometimes the master is seen as masculine, which is a wonderful thing, since the Tao has many qualities that are closely related to the feminine, the openness, and so on. There are many images in the Tao Te Ching that are feminine images, to point to the essential nature of the Tao.

Not that the Tao itself is feminine, but to get a feeling for what Tao is, the Tao Te Ching uses feminine imagery. So here we have a little few lines about the master. The master keeps her mind always at one with the Tao.

That is what gives her her radiance. The Tao is ungraspable. How can her mind be at one with it?

Because she doesn't cling to ideas. The Tao is dark and unfathomable. How can it make her radiant?

Because she lets it. Since before time and space were, the Tao is. It is beyond is and is not.

How do I know this is true? I look inside myself and see. Let's look at it again and see.

The master keeps her mind always at one with the Tao. That is what gives her her radiance. She keeps her mind at one with the Tao.

In the next line it says, if it is ungraspable, how can her mind be at one with it? It says, because she doesn't cling to ideas. Interesting.

She doesn't cling to ideas. That reminds me of the famous Zen saying, I don't remember who said it, but Zen master said it, don't seek for the truth, just cease or stop cherishing opinions. That is, I believe, points to the same inner state of disidentification from thinking.

She doesn't cling to ideas. Cling to. It doesn't mean she doesn't have ideas, the master.

But the master does not cling to ideas. And the Zen master, when he said, don't look for the truth, just stop cherishing opinions, he didn't say, don't say, stop having opinions. Just as Lao Tse does not say, don't have ideas.

He says, don't cling to ideas. And the other master says, stop cherishing opinions. So this clinging, which is the same as cherishing, is self-identification with thoughts that arise.

In other words, you then believe completely in every thought that comes into your head. Amazing. You believe in it, that means you are it.

That is self-identification with thinking. So how then to be at one, always at one with the Tao? So simple.

On the one hand, you could call it stop cherishing opinions. Now any thought that arises ultimately is an opinion you could say. Stop cherishing, stop your self-identification with that.

Or don't cling to ideas in the words of Lao Tse or this present translation here. So that there is always a space between you and your thoughts. Or rather, you are not the thought, you are the space for the thought.

This is how I put it sometimes. You're familiar with that. And perhaps in yourself you know it.

You don't have to be in your thoughts, but you can be the space for your thoughts. Then no matter how weird your thoughts are, it doesn't matter that much. You don't say, oh my God, I shouldn't be having these weird thoughts.

No, because that's another thought. I'm supposed to be spiritually advanced and why am I still having these thoughts? There must be something wrong with me.

Does that sound familiar? That's also thoughts. That's more thoughts that say, I shouldn't be having these thoughts, there's something wrong with me.

And then you believe in those thoughts. Thoughts that judge other thoughts. That may sound familiar to some of you and there's nothing personal in it.

It's the human mind. So you don't need to eliminate thoughts or to say, I should only have pure thoughts because I'm a spiritual person, because by now I should have transcended all impure thoughts. Well, then you're in a dilemma because in this world of polarities if you only want to have pure thoughts, you're creating the other polarity in the unseen.

And sooner or later, the other polarity will come up from behind, creep up. This has been done sometimes by Christians who try to practice the teachings of Christ without entering the state of consciousness out of which that comes. So they try to be pure and spiritual and good Christians and denied the other polarity, repressed it, and then suddenly they get overpowered by something deeply destructive and negative.

So you have a nice, wonderful person who always talks in spiritual, just so, and spiritual. And before you know it, he's screaming at his wife or even hitting his wife, where did that come from? And he can't even admit to himself that this is what's happening.

So if you push away certain thoughts because they do not fit into the mental image of who you are as this or that, then they assume a life of their own. And before you know it, they invade your mind again, if only in your dreams and suddenly you have dreadful nightmares. During a day you're such a spiritual person and at night you suddenly have dreadful nightmares.

Monsters come or you become a monster. Oh my God, this shouldn't be happening. And that's because you're pushing something away.

The true spiritual does not lie in one thought or another thought. It lies in being there as the space for your thoughts. Then it doesn't matter anymore, really.

Whatever thought arises is no more than that. It's a form that arises at this moment. You don't resist it.

You don't need to resist it. But you are the space for it. You don't become it.

Somebody sent me a sticker to put on the car. I haven't put it on my car yet. A very wise sticker.

I don't know where it originated. It says, you don't need to believe every thought you think. So this is the practice then of being the space or the witness for your thoughts rather than being the thought.

And you can practice with your opinions. Many thoughts are actual, most thoughts can, all thoughts could be called opinions, but there are certain things that are definitely, clearly recognizable as opinions when you are talking to people every day when you're having a discussion or talk with friends or colleagues or neighbors. They will express their opinion, whatever it may be about, and you may express your opinion.

And you can then observe whether or not there is self-identification with your opinion. And your opinion, of course, is a mental position, the position of the mind. Are you identified with a mental position?

If you are, then you are cherishing opinions, in the words of the Zen master, or you are clinging to ideas, in the words of Lao Tse. And how do you know that? You know that when, as you discuss things, you become either defensive or aggressive in the expression of your opinion.

Emotion flows into, and you get worked up in, why is that happening? Why are you becoming defensive or aggressive? And, of course, you have to look inside yourself to see whether this is the case or not.

Are you becoming defensive or aggressive? You feel the influx of emotion, and why is this happening? Because unconsciously you feel threatened by somebody who attacks or

questions or contradicts your mental position.

Why do you feel threatened by somebody who questions your mental position? That is a sign that you had identified with a mental position. And identified means your sense of self was in it.

So the person is not attacking your opinion in your unconscious viewpoint. The person you are being attacked, your very life is under attack, because you identified this. This is not true, but this is how it is perceived, as if they were attacking your very existence, because you identified with a mental position.

There was a self in it. So anybody who questions it questions your very existence. It's an unconscious process.

So that's an amazing thing to realize in yourself, and it's a deep-seated unconscious pattern in most human beings. And of course, as you become conscious of that, you can usually see it much more clearly in others, more easily, in your friend or whoever you're having, than in yourself. Usually you say, oh, yes, that's what he always does.

Of course, now I understand what my husband or my wife does. I understand completely that's step one. And that's why I was so happy when I heard Obama say, you don't have to be disagreeable when you disagree with someone.

What that really implies is, because if you do become disagreeable and you disagree with someone, you're identified with a mental position. So you can express, you don't have to relinquish all opinions or mental positions, no. But is that who you are, or is that something in you as a mind movement?

Enormous difference. And if you can have a discussion between people who are not identified with their respective viewpoints, it's a wonderful thing. It's quite beautiful.

An exchange of ideas. But nobody is identified with their ideas, and that's a conscious discussion, a conscious group of people. We call them then conscious, as opposed to unconscious people who are identified, because that's the difference in spiritual terms between conscious and unconscious.

Conscious means non-identification with form. That's what conscious is. And primarily, forms appear as thought forms.

Those are the primary forms. That's where you experience the life of form in yourself as arising thoughts. So occasionally one is able to witness that, and it's always beautiful.

Then a discussion is actually a beautiful thing. Whereas normally in the old unconscious state, as soon as people start discussing something, I feel the strong impulse to leave the room in the unconscious state. Or you can also try to be there as the one conscious

presence while the other is identified.

It may be possible to pull the entire group into consciousness. It may be. But it depends how overwhelming the force of the unconsciousness is in the room and in the people.

So either you stay there as the conscious presence in the room, and then you might say something not against anything or anybody, just put forward your opinion. That might change the vibrational frequency in the room. Or you may have to remove yourself, because ultimately it's insane.

And nothing good comes of it if each person is identified with their mental position. Nothing will come of it. Perhaps some kind of compromise, if you're lucky, some kind of compromise that everybody dislikes.

So, to be at one with the Tao, with the source of life, so that the primordial intelligence can operate through you, you don't have to look for it. Where is the, how can I connect with the primordial intelligence? Eckhart was talking about primordial intelligence.

Well, it's already there. Rather than looking for it as something, just stop doing certain things that block it, and then naturally it's there. So you can also say you don't have to find your true self.

That would be quite hard. I'm looking for myself. Because how could you not be your, if it's your true self, how could you not already be it?

So it's just stop obscuring your true self, if you want to use that expression. So the vital, very vital practice then for everyone is stop identifying with thoughts. And that requires an alertness as you go about your life, especially when engaged with, in conversation with other people, but also in the continuous self-talk that goes on and on in most people's minds.

There also it is vital that you are not totally identified with the arising self-talk. And it's a very strange thing, that self-talk, that you have to look at your own self. Do you have one voice that says, I, in your head?

I, I'm this, I'm that. Or do you have a voice that addresses you as you? It varies from person to person.

What kind of self-talk do you have? Is there some self-talk that is predominantly negative? Is there self-talk that is very critical of yourself a lot of the time?

Is there self-talk that is very critical of others a lot of the time? Is there self-talk that is critical of situations? Is there self-talk that's critical of places where you are?

Or self-talk is critical about what you are doing, but really don't want to be doing. You just have to do it now. But really, as the sticker on the car says, I'd rather be fishing, or

I'd rather be surfing, not driving.

So, I look at the kind of self-habitual self-talk, or do you have two voices that argue with each other? Why can't you ever do the right thing? Well, I'm doing my best, but...

All that is an amazing thing, the voice in the head. I say the voice in the head, and of course for many people it's the voices in the head. What I just mentioned, I believe there was a psychologist who identified those two voices as the top dog and the underdog.

The top dog says, you're no good, why can't you do that? And the underdog says, oh well, I'm trying so hard. And of course, which is the true one?

Are you truly the top dog? You're neither. So, you are the space for those thoughts.

So, all these things are really the vital spiritual practice is for you to become the awareness underneath your thoughts, the awareness around your thoughts, so that you're no longer totally controlled by, and your life is not controlled by, the thoughts that arise that say this or that. And you don't then, you don't feel good, this is a little superficial, and say, okay, I must think positive thoughts otherwise I won't feel good. Okay, I'm really better off than most people on the planet.

And I have to remind myself that I'm actually, that most people are worse off than me. Just think about that to make myself feel a little better. Okay, I have to think about all the poor people who are the best.

And then I can feel better about myself. The true sense of aliveness doesn't come through the medium of thought. It comes from a more vital place within.

It comes from the awareness itself or the consciousness itself. So, the shift then is you step back from your thoughts and look at them and say, oh, a thought. Occasionally, sometimes Buddhists, they practice mindfulness, which is closely related to this, which is becoming aware of whatever your mind does.

I don't think the word mindfulness is such a wonderful translation because it sounds as if your mind were full. But we know what they mean. So, it's awareness practice so that you are not your thoughts.

And then naturally you feel a deeper sense of aliveness and connectedness. And space is when you're not identified anymore, with every thought, and you have spaces in between the thoughts where there's no thought but simply a conscious presence. And that is the Tao.

And that is who you are. And that has no form. And you couldn't say anything much about it, really.

It is ungraspable. The Tao is ungraspable. And this is a pitfall of many spiritual seekers.

They're looking for something to grasp, some kind of experience or some kind of realization, thunder and lightning experience, looking for something as if, or looking for God, as if God could be found as an object in consciousness. And that's why the Zen master said, don't look for the truth. We could all say, don't look for God, don't look for yourself.

Just step out of the mind. Be the space. The Tao is dark and unfathomable.

How can it make her radiant? Because she lets it. She doesn't need to understand it.

It cannot be understood. In fact, in that becoming conscious, understanding plays a very insignificant role, if at all. Perhaps understanding, the main part of understanding is understanding the obstacles to it, but not it.

So again, many spiritual seekers think they need to arrive at some greater or deeper understanding of reality or of God or whatever, or of who they are. No, it's not, the realization does not arise from increased understanding. And that's almost insulting to the human mind.

It says, well, why then have I been studying all these books for 25 years? Well, at least you're here now and realize that that's not the way. So she lets it.

The Tao is dark and unfathomable. This implies you cannot understand it because the moment you understand it, it's no longer unfathomable. You say, oh, now I've got it.

You can never say, now I've got it. If you say, now I've got it, you haven't got it. How can it make her radiant?

Radiant means when you are connected with that, the power flows through you. The radiance comes through. And so she lets it.

She doesn't understand it, but she is attuned when she is connected with it. So in the Course in Miracles, too, it says, you still think that your understanding is a great contribution to the truth, but that is actually not the case. I don't know what the second part of that statement is, but basically it's your understanding is not an important contribution to the truth.

Now, what is the case, however, is that when you are in tune with the Tao, if there is anything here in this world that you need to understand, you will understand it. You don't understand the essence. You cannot understand that.

You can't understand God. You can't understand consciousness. You can only be consciousness.

You can be conscious, in conscious connection with the consciousness, but you can't understand it. This is why I cannot answer questions when people ask me, can you

please define what consciousness is? No, I can't.

Nor can you. But you are it. You can be it.

You can realize that you are it. Then out of that realization, minor understandings arise as whatever, in any situation that you find yourself in, the intelligence operates through you and suddenly you know what is right for this situation. In that sense, understanding comes out of it, but the understanding comes out of the prior position of non-understanding.

The most basic not knowing is vital because it is a state of not thinking. It comes out of, it doesn't come out of your own thinking. You embrace the spaciousness of not thinking.

And then understanding in a limited sense comes out of that, but not understanding of the deepest, that deepest unmanifested, uncreated dimension. Since before time and space were, the Tao is. Is and Tao is one.

It's just is in it. No past, no was, no will be. It is beyond is and is not.

What does that mean? It is beyond is and is not. Beyond existence, what exists or does not exist, beyond is and is not, there's existence which is all forms of life exist.

The vaster dimension, what I call being or what is the Tao, is the unmanifested out of which all existence comes. Existence comes from Latin. It means to stand out.

Ex means out. So existence means a form, but underneath and within each form, there is the formless essence of all life, the Tao. Underneath it, so to speak, all language is very limited because language comes from this world of up, down, left, right, and so on.

Underneath it, there is the unmanifested, the being, and then there's the existence. All existence comes out of being and is essentially being, expressing itself in form. So you yourself have the two aspects.

You exist as a physical and psychological form temporarily, and in your innermost, there is the timeless dimension of being that frees you from being totally caught up in the temporal existence, which is a dreadful thing. How do I know this is true? I look inside myself and see.

The ultimate truth of the universe is within you. You find the ultimate within you. Wherever you go, it will still apply.

I'll read the first line of another verse, just the first line for the moment. Verse 20. I mean a poem.

I don't know if you call them poems. Chapter 20. Stop thinking and end your problems.

Stop thinking and end your problems. All problems are generated by thinking. How do I know this is true?

The famous test that I've many times mentioned to people, and I recommend that you, if you still need it, that you write it on a little card and put it on your bathroom mirror or wherever else you tend to look quite often. And I'm not talking about affirmations such as, I love myself. Well, that's fine, too.

It's better than hating yourself, but it's still within the polarities. No, what I mean is to write something a little like, what's the problem now? What's the problem now?

If you think you have lots of problems in order to touch reality, because problems are generated by continuous thinking, it's not to do with right now. No. The problems exist in the mind in the future, or the imaginary situation that's going to arise perhaps in the future.

Maybe it will arise. Maybe it won't. But usually the imagined situations are far worse than the actual situations when they happen.

So what's the problem now? What happens when you look at that phrase? What's the problem now?

Your attention then goes from being absorbed in, okay, oh my God, what's going to happen to now? Okay, is that a problem now? And then you have to wake up into now to answer the question on this little card, what's the problem now?

You have to actually wake up into the now because you never know there might be a problem now. You have to focus attention and look. And so suddenly your attention moves into the present moment, and there you stand in front of your bathroom mirror and, okay, what's the problem now?

I don't know. You look. Well, then the mind says, oh, you're looking old.

It looks in the mirror. That's the problem. No, of course it's not a problem.

It's a thought that arises. And usually the mind has, of course, more complicated things to say, but then you realize that at this moment it's not actually a problem. But the mind says, yes, but it will become a problem in the next moment.

But, of course, when the next moment comes, it comes again as this moment, and then you have to ask the question again. What is the problem now? And the amazing realization will come to you that there never is a problem now, only a situation.

You can deal with it or leave it alone for the time being. It's never a problem. Some situations demand immediate action, and then, of course, it's not a problem.

There's no time for it to become a problem. If it demands immediate action, you look and you act. Other things you may have to think about, you might occasionally have to think, okay, what are the possible solutions to this situation?

And what you do then is to apply focused thinking, but before you do that, you become still, present. And then out of that then comes, okay, what are the possibilities in this situation? I could pick up the phone and make a phone call to that person.

I can look, go to that place and ask for help. I can go there, too, and I can do that. One, two, three, four, five, write it down, put it aside, okay, and then which one of these can I do now?

And then you do it. It's not a problem. If I juggle ideas, thoughts in my mind uselessly, that's a problem.

What if? What if? Attention back to now.

What's the problem now? And so it's always amazing to realize that the now is free of problems because you're breathing, you're perceiving your senses, you feel the aliveness in the body, more than enough to deal with any situation that may arise or may be there. Of course, that's why people love dangerous activities.

Some people get addicted to danger because it stops their mind and they have no problems while they're climbing up the mountain. They're totally present. So for a little while, you can't carry your problems up the mountain wall if you're climbing up a sheer wall of a mountain.

If you carry your problems with you, you're going to fall off. So you have to leave your problems and be totally present and so that's why it is so, you feel so much more alive there because the mind, the parasite that otherwise sucks up your energy is not active at that time. Or you go surfing.

You can't think about, I wonder how high this, you just, you look and you do or you look and you don't do or you fall in. It's all fine. There's no thinking.

You can't think. You're not going to be very good at it if you're thinking. Stop thinking and end your problems.

What difference between yes and no? What difference between success and failure? Must you value what others value?

Avoid what others avoid? How ridiculous. What difference it says between success and failure?

What is meant by that is that success and failure are mental labels that you attach. And so the Master, she does not live or he does not live according to these mental labels

where you go, wow, I am so successful and then attach yourself to that idea because it may turn into the opposite. Or you don't describe yourself as a failure or a success because both are ways of identifying with a form in your mind.

I am a great success. I am the best-selling author. Okay.

What if three years from now nobody buys the book anymore? What happens to my sense of identity then? Well, I can still then cling to and then say I once was a best-selling author.

So, deriving your identity from a conceptual sense of self, and very often success or failure is part of one's conceptual sense of self and it gives you your sense of who you are. It's a very limited sense of who you are. A conceptual identity either as a successful person, and of course there is always a fear that it may not last.

And of course it probably won't because nothing lasts forever. So, successful person, precarious conceptual sense of self, and continuously you will find the more successful you are, the more things come in that the conceptual image is being attacked. They are beginning to write about you in People magazine or they are beginning to...

People is still quite benign, but there are other magazines that will tear you to pieces. And so you have to... Your conceptual sense is very shaky.

Your identity is derived from myself as the one who is successful. When many people want that, there is nothing wrong with achieving. The question is whether you need that to give you an enhanced identity or whether you simply enjoy the play of form in this world and you contribute, but there is no self-identification in a conceptual way and that is great freedom.

Identity then, failure, another very strong sense of identity for people, another conceptual identity of thinking of yourself as somebody who has failed at something. My life has been a failure. It's too late now.

I've made so many mistakes. I've married the wrong person. I chose the wrong career.

I tried but it didn't work out. The world didn't recognize my talents. I never had a real chance.

Life never gave me a chance. If only my parents had taught me at an early age. If only they had not.

If only the system wasn't so. If only then perhaps, but it's too late now. That's a heavy sense of self.

It's a conceptual identity that is as heavy or heavier than the person who thinks I've made it in the world. I'm the great one who has achieved wealth, fame and so on. They

are both heavy but as I say perhaps the miserable one is even heavier.

And of course I'm giving you these two extremes which do exist in certain people. For many people there's a movement, they fluctuate between these two of thinking of yourself as oh actually not bad, quite good. I'm actually still better looking than most.

Or if that's your conceptual identity. Or I still have more money than most of my friends or neighbors. Or then you shift into oh I'm losing.

I'm losing it. I'm losing out. The others are overtaking me.

People I was at school with, they're already there and I'm still here. Oh dear. So again so here we have where does your sense of self come from?

The conceptual, the concepts in your mind or does it come not from any kind of thought but from that which is deeper than thought? The stillness, the depths, the presence that you are. And that's the liberation.

It's when your sense of who you are comes out of the presence of who you are in essence which is the consciousness that you are. And then it is secondary. I sometimes say it is no longer of absolute importance then what your life situation is.

Once you know who you are, and you can only know it in this moment, you can't say okay now I know it, what's next? No. Once you know who you are in this now, the only place where you can know who you are, your life situation is only of relative importance.

It's still relatively important, the way I put it, whether you are poor or wealthy. Well it does make some difference in your life. Yes, true.

It's of relative importance whether you are healthy or the body is not doing very well. Of course it's relative importance. Whether you have satisfying relationships is important.

Whether you have a nice place to live or an unpleasant place to live, yes of course it's important but it is not of absolute importance anymore. Everything in your life situation then is of relative importance because there's only the one thing that matters absolutely and that is knowing who you are beyond all the forms. Knowing yourself as the presence underneath it all.

And then you can live with any life situation and be at peace with it and still deal with it and still be active but be at peace with whatever the situation is at the moment. You are deeper than that. You are beyond that.

You are the consciousness. You are not ultimately the person who is having a life situation. The person who has a place where he or she lives which may be good or not so good.

The person who has relationships. The person who has money or no money. Yes, these things matter but they don't matter absolutely.

If they matter absolutely it means you don't know the absolute. Then they matter absolutely and they have the power to make you miserable, the things of this world. Even success can make you then miserable as it's often the case.

There are as many people made miserable by failure as people made miserable by success. So what is who am I? At some point we talked about that as a meditation method so to speak, the simplest meditation method to ask who am I?

And of course that is the most vital question and none, whatever concepts are arising in your mind about who you are are not who you are. So the wonderful liberation is to go beyond a conceptual sense of self and this is not only liberating to yourself so to speak but you liberate other people from imposing on them also a conceptual sense of self. This is a dreadful thing to do to other human beings because then you no longer recognize the essential aliveness and your essential oneness with that so-called other human being.

You no longer recognize that. To you then the other being, human being becomes reduced to a concept in your head and so you have a set of beliefs about who that other human being is. And why are you doing that to another human being?

Because before you did it to yourself and you continuously do it to yourself. Then you cannot not do it to another human being, imposing a conceptual identity onto others. And so that's an enormous improvement that then happens in relationships when you do not come from a conceptual sense of self and therefore no longer impose a conceptual sense of self on others, a set of judgments, a set of criticisms of who they are, judgmental judgments.

That's such a normal thing to do. It doesn't mean you don't see certain behavior patterns in another human being. It may well be that you see that the person who knocks on your door and wants to sell you something, what he's trying to sell you is a fake and he's trying to tell you that it is genuine so you're not going to say in your mind, okay, I must not believe that he's an honest person.

No, you don't have to believe anything. And here comes something in that there's a knowing for which you don't need concepts. You can know if a person tries to deceive you, you know it without having to call him a thief or a manipulator.

You see it and that's all. You see what behavior pattern governs this person and then you also see there is something deeper than that behavior pattern. You don't react as if that behavior pattern were the ultimate reality of that human being.

And that's a wonderful thing that you can do for another human being is not to act as if

the behavior they manifest were their ultimate reality because it isn't. And sometimes the miracle happens that you can free without consciously doing it, not thinking that I'm going to free you, but by being in that state of consciousness, you can free, sometimes it happens, you can free a person from their limited unconscious behavior patterns because you are not acknowledging it. You see it, but you don't acknowledge it.

If you acknowledge it, if you impose judgments, you reduce the human being to something that is not, but by doing it to another, you do it to yourself. And this is perhaps why Jesus said, judge not so that you are not judged because you're really, you're judging always yourself. And so in the Course in Miracles there's a beautiful line.

That was the first line I ever heard about the Course in Miracles when it came to England in 1980-something. I was, I saw this strange thing, people said, Course in Miracles said, oh no, another weird thing has come from California. And of course it turned out it wasn't from California, it came from New York, but was actually written at Columbia University, would you believe that?

And this person, I asked the person, have you ever heard of this weird thing called a Course in Miracles? And the person said, I don't know much about it except one sentence, and that is, what you perceive in another you strengthen in yourself. So perceive here means what you focus on in the other.

If you focus on the other is dishonest, if the other is unconscious in some behavior in the other, what you focus on you strengthen in yourself. If that becomes your reality, it draws you into the same. So here freedom then comes from not imposing conceptual identities on others.

Which you can only do if you no longer impose or believe in or derive your identity from conceptual sense of self in your own mind. And so you end up, of course, with something that the ego does not particularly like, because the opinions that you have about yourself are becoming quite insubstantial or weak. In other words, you are beginning to have fewer and fewer opinions about who you are.

That's being attuned with the Tao. And so when then people ask you about how do you see yourself, as I have occasionally once or twice have been asked by people who came to interview me, so how do you see yourself? Well, I don't know.

Not in any particular way. I gave very unsatisfying answers to these questions. I don't know.

I don't see myself. If I saw myself as a great spiritualist, spiritual teacher, that would be the beginning of delusion, because it would be the beginning of identification with a form identity. If I saw myself as a successful author now and derived some satisfaction from it, yes, it's fulfilling to know that many people are being helped.

This is wonderful, but I didn't do that as such. It happened through this form. I would have been very unhappy for many years when my conceptual reality was one of, if I had had one, my mother had it for me, of being unsuccessful in this world, a failure, a person who has made so many mistakes and now it's too late for everything.

So that would have been, for 20 years I would have lived in that very painful conceptual reality. You have failed. Look at your friends from school.

They've got their big cars now. They've got their careers. What have you got to show for it?

Nothing. If I had had that, it would have been painful. But fortunately, even on the park bench already, there was no conceptual identity and the park bench was a beautiful place.

It was fine. Only others felt sorry for me and that was fine too. I remember my father, a little later, I acquired a bicycle.

My father then came for a visit to London where I was living and at that time he was a businessman. He was staying in this hotel on the 10th floor and I visited him in his room. Opposite the hotel was a park and there was a railings and I chained my bicycle to the railings and very proudly I said, I was about 30 or 31 then, my father, I said, look down there.

There's my bike. And he got very upset. He said, what?

Oh, poor you. You have to go on a bike in London. That's terrible.

What a terrible thing. I never expected that response. It was a nice new bike.

And so deep down he felt, oh, my poor son, he failed, although never went that far in his belief as my mom did. But fortunately, before she passed away, her son became successful. I'll just read the rest of this chapter, 20.

There's a little bit of humor in this chapter. Lao Tse talks about himself, but humorously. It's funny.

I'm excited as though they were at a parade. I alone don't care. I alone am expressionless like an infant before it can smile.

Other people have what they need. I alone possess nothing. I alone drift about like someone without a home.

I'm like an idiot. My mind is so empty. Of course, that would be an external viewpoint.

There's always a certain similarity between the master who has gone beyond thinking

and the simpleton who has not yet arrived at thinking, the so-called fool. The fool is pre-thought. The master is post-thought.

But they can be confused. You can confuse one with the other, which is beautifully expressed in an old film with Peter Sellers called Being There, where the main character in that film is a very simple person who has never even arrived at ego yet. And yet, because of the similarity with that state and the transcendent state, he's mistaken by everybody for the wisest person around.

And even in the end of the film, put forward to become President of the United States. I am like an idiot. My mind is so empty.

Other people are bright. I alone am dark. Other people are sharp.

I alone am dull. Other people have a purpose. I alone don't know.

I drift like a wave on the ocean. I blow as aimless as the wind. I'm different from ordinary people.

I drink from the Great Mother's breasts. In an alternative translation, the last line is, I am nourished by the Great Mother. I'm nourished by the Great Mother.

He had quite a sense of humor, Lao Tse. There's a lot of humor in here. It's not necessarily immediately visible, but it's there.

We didn't get very much done in the Tao Te Ching, but that's fine. Only two little chapters. That doesn't matter, because the truth is in every line.

It's like a hologram. Any spiritual teaching really, it doesn't go, you have to know this first for you to understand that. The truth is everywhere, in every statement, in every sentence, on every page.

One of the most important teachings of Zen is to be free of reactivity. And I think that you just embody absolute presence. And it's such simplicity in that.

Very powerful, extremely powerful teaching, embodied by the Zen masters, who on most paintings look quite fierce. If you've seen drawings of Zen masters, they look quite fierce. But if they're good drawings, and if you look closely, then they're real works of art, and you can see underneath the fierceness, there is compassion and softness.

The fierceness is there to cut through mind and ego in the other. Many years ago, I talked to a Zen monk. That was about two or three years after I went through this awakening.

And I was visiting a monastery, and he said, well, Zen is really to do about not thinking. And that was a great teaching for me, because I suddenly realized why I had been so

peaceful for the past two years. There wasn't much thinking going on anymore in my head.

Some, a necessary amount, but certainly not thinking that makes me unhappy. That was my usual thinking, was thinking that made me continuously unhappy. I didn't know that, that it was my thinking.

I thought it was something to do with my life. I'm unhappy because of my miserable life. But what was my miserable life?

My miserable life was the thoughts in my head. That was my life. There was nothing wrong with my life there.

Yes, I didn't have any money. I lived in a little room in what they called Bed-Sit in London, where you cook and do everything in one room. And I had to share that with other people.

The bathroom is seven or eight people in different rooms, and always had to line up for the toilet, and I had indigest constipation because of that, and many other things. Little complaints, but on the whole, it was fine. But the problem was, the unhappiness was in my head.

It was my thoughts. And so the anxiety, what's going to happen to me, am I going to make it? Anxiety, or opinions about my life, how dreadful it all is.

Thoughts. And then, that night, the thoughts kind of collapsed, and then I woke up the next morning in the same dreadful room, which wasn't dreadful anymore. And into the same dreadful life, which wasn't dreadful anymore, suddenly, because the dreadful was a thought, and the rest was alive.

So I woke up, and it was beautiful. It was fine. There's nothing wrong with this room.

There's nothing wrong with waiting for the toilet. You can just wait. But I didn't realize, I said, where does that peace come from?

I don't know. So I visited some teachers, and finally I met this Zen monk, I can't remember the name even, and he said, well, Zen is really about not thinking anymore. And that was a great teaching for me, because I suddenly realized why I had been so peaceful for the past two years.

And the strange thing was, I didn't know that I wasn't thinking that much anymore. I just wasn't thinking that much anymore. And the non-thinking I experienced as peace.

So I called it peace. But not until I talked to him did I realize, oh, it's because my mind isn't very active anymore. The inner voice in the head, the voice in the head isn't saying that much anymore.

And the little that the voice is still saying is not very important. And the voice doesn't make me unhappy anymore, but the little that it's still saying, it just says a few things. It says things, oh, isn't that nice?

So it doesn't make you unhappy. It's a great step if the voice in your head loses its power to make you unhappy. That's the end of unhappiness, because all unhappiness really derives from the voice in your head telling you something, and you believe it.

And then when that goes, you look around and you say, oh, there's no unhappiness in this table or this flower or the air I'm breathing or the street scene I'm looking at or the tree or the cup of tea. There's no unhappiness anywhere. It was all in here.

But I didn't know that it was in here, and I thought it was all out there. So, that's the end of unhappiness. That's awakening.

Whether it happens gradually, as it happens to many of you as you sit here, or whether it happens suddenly through some huge knock on your head that knocks the thoughts out of you. But it doesn't, you don't become stupid. You become more intelligent when excessive thinking subsides.

You would have thought, or the mind probably would have thought, oh, I'll become stupid because I won't be knowing things anymore. You don't need to know a lot of things that you think you need to know. For example, about other people.

You don't need to have firm opinions about who they are, because then you freeze them. They get frozen into conceptual structures in your head. You do it to other humans.

It's almost an act of violence. You freeze them and say, that's how he is, how she is. Just a few judgments and concepts and you've wrapped up the whole person.

That is a dreadful thing to do to a person, but it's unconscious, of course. You don't do that anymore to others. Oh, isn't that, doesn't that improve relationships with other humans?

And then you don't do it to yourself, because people who do it to others do it to themselves also. A set of, just a bundle of thoughts about who I am. That's not who you are.

You are infinitely deeper and vaster than that. It's absurd. So to let go of those opinions about myself and others, and then life flows.

Beautiful in relationships, the flow of life in yourself. You allow others their freedom and you yourself become free. You feel free inside.

So that monk then gave me the recognition of why I had been so peaceful over the past two years. Thinking. And so I began slowly, and then when later people came to ask me

a few questions, then later gradually I pointed out that there's a voice in your head.

I don't know when I first said it to somebody, and they said, what? I'm not insane. I said, yes, you are.

But so is everybody else, and I was too. And of course, that's the reason why very few people understand Zen. The reason is, you can't understand it.

You can't understand it. You can't understand it conceptually. That's why you have the famous Zen story.

Well, I don't know if it's famous, but we have a Zen story where the disciple is asked by the master, in the usual way of the Zen master, he kind of catches the disciple by surprise, do you understand Zen? Says the master, and the disciple goes, no, I don't. And the master says, neither do I.

So the difference between the disciple and the master is, the disciple doesn't understand, but thinks he should understand, and the master doesn't understand and is fully okay with not understanding, so he's at a deeper level. The need to understand conceptually is gone, and there is rooted in being and presence. And the disciple thinks, I should understand, I should understand.

And it's not only Zen, because it's yourself. You don't need to understand yourself. Many people are kind of trying to figure out something about themselves, some answer about, some ultimate answer about who I am, or what's wrong with me.

Many people have that persistent feeling that there's something wrong with them. Many people believe they are a problem to be solved, a walking problem to be solved. So you go to the psychiatrist, say, can you solve the problem that I am?

So to have some ultimate, some final conclusion about me, you can't, because you're much too vast and deep to be encapsulated in a few thoughts, no matter how complex the thoughts may be, it's not who you are. So the need to understand yourself is just as, to drop that, is just as vital as the, if you want to understand Zen, because ultimately the essence of Zen is you. Otherwise, it's not a subject outside of you would be pointless.

If Zen were a subject to be studied outside of you, what's the point? But Zen is just a way of approaching the reality of who you are. So to understand Zen, or to rather to let go of the need to understand, it really means also to let go of the need to understand who you are.

And then you go deeper into an intelligence that does not need to be conceptualized through thoughts. And then you're rooted in that vaster intelligence. You don't become stupid, you become for the first time, truly intelligent.

You're rooted in that deep intelligence. Creativity resides there, aliveness, freshness, joy, and you're there because you don't need to have an opinion anymore about yourself to have your identity derived from some thoughts in your head. Or you ask others, what do you think of me?

I don't want to know what you think of me, it's just thoughts. I don't even think anything of me myself. So I don't need to know what others think of me, it's just thoughts.

Some person says he's the greatest teacher ever, the other says he's a fraud, the other one says he's talking mumbo-jumbo, the other one says he's talking great wisdom. It's just thoughts. So to let go of needing to understand yourself, and then you can be yourself, rather than have, and derive your sense of identity of who you are from that deeper level that is not conceptualized, aliveness.

Alive peace. And you live as that, and not as the conceptualized identity in the head. That's the unhappy me that I carried around, and many carry around.

In the head. Conceptualized identity. And it's always not enough.

There's always something missing. It always needs more of this or more of that, and confirmation that I exist, that I'm good enough, please tell me I'm good enough. Amazing awakening.

No problems, you don't have any problems unless you go here and look for them. Just the situation in this moment. Just whatever you need to deal with in this moment, there's no problem in this moment.

Because at any moment you can look for it and ask yourself whether there is truly a problem in your life, but always there's a simplicity of this moment. You can look for just this. You have to be alert to see, is there a problem?

Not really, not now. And then again, because the mind says, no, but you're going to have a problem tomorrow morning. And then when tomorrow morning comes, you have to go there again, say, is there a problem now?

Not now, because now is too small for a problem. It's just whatever the situation is now. Well probably you have to go into your mind and suddenly you go, past and future.

What's the image of Atlas, the man who carries the globe, the earth on his shoulders? Oh, can't stand it anymore. Life, I can't stand life anymore.

Can't stand it. Well, what you can't stand isn't life, it's the stuff in your head. The truth is liberating.

It's a relief. Who said that? Oh yes, the truth will make you free.

Oh no, that's not complete. Know the truth and the truth will make you free. So the truth itself is fine, but to know it, which means to realize it is within yourself, know the truth, that's the truth of who you are and the truth will make you free.

2,000 years ago, in case you haven't read the New Testament. Welcome. Make sure you are here with your attention rather than in your mind and in your thinking, like then you'll be somewhere else.

A helpful thing is to look at this from the point of view of the present moment. Come out of your mind means come into the present moment. The present moment is this.

The surface of this is the depth of your sense perceptions and the depth of this, and that's the real present moment, the depth. The depth cannot be defined conceptually. It can be pointed to, that's why I'm using words, but it cannot be understood conceptually.

The depth of this, and that's the real present moment, and your mind will not know what I mean when I say depth. Depth, what does that mean? To the mind, it's just another concept, but if depth can be a signpost, so rather than look at it, if this is the signpost, you say depth, what's that?

You have to then let go of the concept and sense, so to speak, inside right now, the depth that makes all the sense perceptions and the experience of this moment possible in you, the space in you. The light in you in which this room appears is seen, is perceived. The light in which this voice is heard, it appears, that has no form, but it makes all this possible.

This may be a dream, but even if it is a dream, there's something that makes this dream possible to be, and that's the essence of who you are, and you sense that within yourself, and that is, when you do that, another way of putting it, you're then sensing what now actually means. So beyond what appears in the now, which is this room and this voice and the flowers and the light, there's something deeper that cannot be understood or conceptualized. We could say it's consciousness itself.

You are the light of the world, somebody said 2,000 years ago. You are the light of the world. Now, that's not the you that has a name and a little history.

There's a deeper essence to you, the consciousness that you are. That's the light of the world. So we become aware of that, and that's becoming aware of the now.

It's one with the now, what we call the now. That's the power of now, is to become aware of that directly, and that frees you from the temporary, the temporary person. There's nothing wrong with the person, that you are for a while, but if that's all there is, then it's very frustrating.

Little me with a little history, and the end will come soon. So you become still and alert

and spacious inside. Ah, nothing needs to be understood at this moment.

There's an intelligence there that doesn't need to understand conceptually, which means cut it up into little bits and pieces. That's conceptual understanding. Oh, and not small enough, I need to understand more.

And then you get a grinder or whatever. That's called a PhD. But you never get beyond, you never get beyond, you never get beyond it.

You just can cut smaller and smaller segments, and then you need a big microscope. And of course, the ultimate mystery can never be known that way, because it cannot be worked out conceptually. So you become still inside and alert, spacious.

The greatest thing is finding the spaciousness inside yourself. Right now, where you don't need to know even who you are anymore. What for?

You are that light, but you don't need to call it light. You are that space, but you don't need to call it space. Just be it.

Of course, what's in the way of that, can that be a continuous realization? Rather than just when you are in a protected environment like here, nothing is impinging upon you. Nothing is impinging your senses.

Everything is conducive towards this realization. No phone is ringing. No computer screens flashing, saying, give me attention.

But then life, you go back into life. And then, is it possible to live this realization as a continuous state of being? Yes, that's the art.

That's why you're here, to bring that into your daily, not just to have little experiences. And then you remember them and say, I had a great experience there five years ago. And then life happened.

So as we are here, we are here to bring that together. In the background, there is that presence, in the background of who you are. And that's the essence of this gathering.

And that's why we are here. And even while we look at seemingly other things, they are not other things. At the most, we look at the things that tend to obscure the realization of the depths within yourself.

Things that tend to interfere and take you away, obscure it. That is helpful to know what tends to habitually obscure that realization. Because if you don't know it, you get taken over by it without even knowing it.

It has you. There's no recognition of it. So it's very helpful to recognize how it happens that this, the depths that you are, becomes obscured through misuse of the mind.

Dysfunctional mind patterns and habitual ways of thinking. It's also wonderful, of course, to be here and occasionally just experience the stillness in between the words, without thinking that it needs to be filled with something. And then you can experience the same experience when you're at home.

It is, one of these habit patterns of the mind, dysfunctional habit patterns, is that this moment needs to be filled with something. Of course, you have to do things, but also see if you can experience the spaciousness of this moment. This civilization tells you you have to fill every moment with some kind of doing.

And then you lose the sense of being. And when you lose the sense of being, no doing is ever enough to satisfy you, except very briefly. Ah, I got that done.

And 10 seconds later, the mind says, oh, okay, now I have to think about, oh, yeah, I still, okay, all those things to do. Oh, and then I got, oh, I got that done. So, throughout history, from time to time, there were individuals who recognized, even a long time ago, they recognized the habitual dysfunction of the human mind.

And they recognized it as a dysfunction. And they said there is a way out, there is a way beyond. They pointed to the nature of the dysfunction, and they pointed to the way beyond.

A very famous person, of course, was the Buddha, who saw that. He described the dysfunction. He saw that if you live in the dysfunctional state, you suffer.

So normal human existence, he said, is suffering. But there is a way out of suffering. So that's, Buddha is a famous example of someone who had this recognition.

One of the most important moments in the history of humanity, not the battles, or the kings, or the mad emperors, or the politicians, that's not, one of the most important moments in the history of humanity was the recognition on the part of one human being of what's wrong with humans and what's right with humans. So the Buddha said, I teach suffering and the end of suffering, which means I show you how you create your own suffering, I show you how you can go beyond your own suffering that you create by stopping to create it. That's the message of the Buddha.

And there were others also who had that realization, most, Jesus had the realization expressed in different terms according to the listener and the culture. And always a few people here and there had that realization, there's a thread running through history, and that thread is sometimes called the perennial philosophy. There's a knowing there that surfaces from time to time and then gets buried again and then surfaces again.

And a few people get changed by it in history, but most humans don't understand. Except now, more humans are beginning to understand than before. Not just understand, able to realize the truth of it.

And I find it wonderful to discover when I read an ancient book, to see, wow, there's already that basic realization there of the dysfunction of the human mind. And this is why in these sessions from time to time, I talk about a book or a teaching that is ancient or, well, from some time past. You may know that I've already spoke briefly about the Tao Te Ching, about the meditations by Marcus Aurelius, and about the teachings of Ralph Waldo Emerson in the 19th century.

But it's always, it's just looking at the fundamental truth through slightly different lenses. That's all it is. And when we talk about it here, it's not like a university lecture.

I don't want to give you knowledge about history. You don't need that. It really, whatever we talk about here, is about you.

So if we talk about this philosophy that few people have heard of, called Epictetus, E-P-I-C-T-E-T-U-S, who lived about 2000 years ago. He was born in the year 55, Greek. We're not really talking about Epictetus.

We're not really talking about, we are talking about, it's always about you. So this, I only discovered this really a couple of years ago, his teachings. I had a book that I bought a long, long time ago in England in a secondhand bookstore, but I never got into Epictetus in that way.

The translation, I think, was not very good. And then I got this book and said, wow, this is wonderful. It's a good, it's a wonderful translation too.

This is the Penguin Classic, Epictetus. Just something that may be helpful to know about him, because how did he get this realization of the, how did he discover it? What helped him to discover it?

Yes, he had one or two teachers, but his main teacher was his personal circumstances. And his personal circumstances were as follows. He was a slave.

He was born into slavery. His mother was already a slave. So he grew up as a slave and for part of his adult life, he was a slave.

His body was also crippled. He described himself as lame. Nobody knows exactly in what way.

And there is one ancient source that says that his master, the person who owned him, mistreated him and he caused, he broke his legs or his leg or something like that. That may be true. So here we have first two factors.

A person who is not free externally and a person who is not free as far as mobility is concerned. A person who has no status in society. And another factor is that his master, who was quite wealthy, lived in Rome and was always at the court, the imperial court of

the infamous Emperor Nero, one of the many completely insane emperors.

If you read that, any politician is very sane, at least relative to them. And the other one, even the most insane western, well there have been some others, but let's not go there. So he also would often, for some reason, maybe he accompanied his master as a servant, he would actually observe what was happening in court.

He was a nobody, but he observed the most important people in the empire, how they behaved, what they did and what happened to them. Of course, the closer you were in court to the emperor, the more dangerous your life would be, especially if the emperors is mad. So his teaching was his condition, which one would say would really probably create an unhappy human being.

If you're a slave, you're crippled, and you have to watch all these wealthy and powerful people, so on the surface that would be enough reason to justify unhappiness or a low opinion of yourself. And perhaps that was the case initially. But he discovered in himself that the cause of his unhappiness was not the situation, and here we come to one of the two central points of his teaching.

The cause of any upset or unhappiness, he said, is not the situation or the condition, but the thoughts that my mind is creating concerning the situation or the condition. And the moment he realized that, there was no more suffering. He became free from external condition, and that is the second point of his teaching, the possibility for humans to become free as far as their internal state is concerned, to become free of externals.

That's his teaching. The two are connected, of course, that any upset arises from your mind and not from the situation, the suffering, the unhappiness arises through judgment or situations. And we always look to externals, he says, for our fulfillment, and we never find it.

And he points to the possibility of becoming free of that, and then no matter what the external situation is, inside you have a space of freedom. You are no longer a reactive entity, you are no longer governed by external events, and that's an incredible freedom. Because if your inner state is always dependent on external events, then you're at the mercy of what happens or fails to happen but should happen.

You're at the mercy of what people do and say or should do and say but don't. You're at the mercy of everything. And so you live in that way, that is unconscious living, dysfunctional living.

And he saw all that through his own condition. So, wonderful thing. Then he became free internally, and a little later he was given his freedom externally.

This was not totally uncommon. It happened quite frequently that a slave, after working for 20 or 30 years, the master would say, I'll give you your freedom. And he did.

He became free, and he became a teacher of so-called philosophy, which is very different from what is called philosophy at university these days. This philosophy is intensely vital. It is teaching you how to live.

So he was more a spiritual teacher than a philosopher, but at the time the word for it was philosopher. He became a philosopher, and then he moved to Greece, and he set up a school of philosophy, which became quite famous, and people would travel, many Romans would travel to learn with him. And in the end, even when Nero was no longer emperor, the emperor Hadrian actually visited him to pay his respects, the slave, become a philosopher.

And even the emperor Marcus Aurelius considered him to be one of his teachers. So his social condition and so on becomes irrelevant there. Marcus Aurelius had certain realizations, perhaps not the deepest possible, but he saw some things very clearly, and he was wealthy and powerful, and Epictetus saw the same things very clearly, and he had no power and no wealth and wasn't interested.

It made no difference. External conditions then become irrelevant. So, he also teaches to use all conditions in your life as something helpful, because you can practice.

He compares it to having a sparring partner if you're training for the Olympics or whatever. Every condition is something you can, you use the ability, growth in you, the freedom. If you are challenged by a condition, then how do you approach the challenge?

With inner resistance, or are you able to accept what is, there's great power in that, and then you grow internally, so to speak, in consciousness, the light grows. The more challenges you have, the better. And he said, to quote one sentence, he said, if you look at tragedies, ancient Greek tragedies, they're really based on certain dysfunctional mind patterns, and that creates the tragedy.

You can look the same way at any modern movie or novel. People behave in certain dysfunctional ways, and that creates the drama. So, he says, behold the birth of tragedy, when idiots come face to face with the challenges of life.

Idiot means a person who is unconsciously reacting, and then you create your own drama in life, when you come face to face with the challenges of life. But even in translation, this is a very good translation in this book, Penguin Classic, it is powerful, and it is I'm sure more or less exactly how he spoke. And that's wonderful, I'll read a few things to you in a minute.

It still has the power to transform. So, a little story in connection with that, you may remember, some of you, in 1992, Ross Perot was running as an independent president for president of the United States, and he had chosen as his running mate a person called Stockdale, and Stockdale, of course, Ross Perot didn't become president, so

Stockdale didn't become vice president, but he later became the vice admiral in the Navy. What's important about Stockdale is that in Vietnam, he was a fighter pilot, and he was shot down, and he was a prisoner of war for seven years, four years of which he lived in solitary confinement, and he credits his survival to the teachings of Epictetus.

He had apparently a little book with him of the teachings, and he said that was what kept him alive. When he was shot down, the story goes, and he was ejected from the plane, and then he could see the soldiers coming towards him with rifles, he said, he whispered to himself, I'm leaving the world of technology, and I'm entering the world of Epictetus, and the next seven years were his, the application of the teaching. I will now take a few very short passages and read and then talk about each one.

I must warn you, sometimes he can be quite extreme, and you say, oh, no. It is not events that disturb people, it is their judgment concerning them. Death, for example, is nothing frightening, otherwise it would have frightened Socrates, but the judgment that death is frightening, now that is something to be afraid of.

So when we are frustrated, angry, or unhappy, never hold anyone except ourselves, that is our judgments, accountable. When we are frustrated, angry, or unhappy, never hold anyone except ourselves, that is to say, our judgments, accountable. An ignorant person is inclined to blame others for his own misfortune.

To blame oneself is proof of progress, but the wise man never has to blame another or himself. So you look to the root cause of where unhappiness arises, where upset arises, not the situation, it's my judgment about the situation. A vital teaching.

And as you practice that, gradually, you become free of attachment to your mind. You gradually disidentify from what your mind is saying. And gradually, more spaciousness arises in you as you disidentify from the judgment of your mind by recognizing it as a judgment.

So that's the work, you could call it. That's the practice. And life continuously gives you stuff to practice with.

Stuff happens continuously. And of course, if you say, why I want to have some peace and quiet? But life doesn't allow you.

And if you do get peace and quiet, then that becomes the problem. There's nothing happening anymore. And now he has a little bit of advice of how to approach things so that you become free of the dependency on externals.

In the case of particular things that delight you, or benefit you, or to which you have grown attached, remind yourself of what they are. Start with things of little value. If it is a piece of china that you like, for instance, say, I am fond of a piece of china.

Because otherwise the mind says, this is the precious thing from so and so that I inherited. It's a piece of china. Yes, but I bought it at Sotheby's at the, it's a piece of china.

So if you discover attachment, say, I'm fond of a piece of china. When it breaks, then you won't be as disconcerted. Now the next step here is where you go, oh.

When giving your wife or child a kiss, repeat to yourself, I'm kissing a mortal. Then you won't be as distraught if they are taken from you. Of course, it's a fact.

You are kissing a mortal. You are kissing a mortal, aren't you? Yes, it's a fact.

Of course the mind says, yeah, but why should I remind myself of that? Well, it might seem a little extreme to you, but just to have the, you don't have to say that verbally, but to have the, you don't have to say that verbally, but to know at the back of your mind that any human being that you're with or yourself, yes, you are mortal. The end could come at any moment.

Of course it could. I'm kissing a mortal. And now comes a little bit, some other piece of advice.

They're all very closely related, of course. Whenever planning an action mentally, rehearse what the plan entails. If you're heading out to bathe, picture to yourself the typical scene at the bath house.

That's where they used to go to bathe. People splashing, pushing, yelling, and pinching your clothes. You will complete the act with more composure if you say at the outset, I want a bath, but at the same time, I want to keep my will aligned with nature.

So you know what you want. That's one aim that you have. Of course, you will go there to have a bath, but that's not all.

I also want what he calls keep my will aligned with nature means not to fall out of alignment with the present moment and the flow of life internally, not to step out of alignment with that, to keep my will aligned with that. In other words, let's translate it into our terminology. I'm going there to have a bath, but I'm also going there to stay present.

So you have an inner aim and an outer aim. So what he's really actually saying is don't have just outer aims because then you get lost in the outer. As you pursue your outer aims, remind yourself that you have also an inner aim that's even more important than the outer aim, and that is to stay present as you engage in action and do things.

That's extremely useful to remember because otherwise you go into situations and they don't unfold as they should, the mind says, and you get upset. And upset, by the way, is

a form of suffering. Anger is a form of suffering.

Now, the egoic mind doesn't know that. The egoic minds have a right to be angry in this situation, but you're suffering. Suffering?

No, I'm not suffering. Now, if you look into your body, then you will know that you're suffering because if you look and see what the anger does to the physiology of the body, to your heart, to your breathing, to the circulation of your blood and so on, you realize that your body is actually suffering from this emotional state. It is suffering.

For the first time they discovered it when they discovered 200 years ago, whenever it was, somebody was shot in the stomach and the hole just didn't heal. So that was the first person, they could peer into his stomach and see when he got angry, the lining of the stomach became red. First time they saw that.

And many other things happen in the body. So it is a form of suffering. And so, two aims.

I'm here to get from A to B, but I'm also here to practice presence, to be present. I'm here to discuss the important business deal, but I'm also here to be present. The two, you have the inner aim and the outer aim.

That's what he is saying. If you forget the inner, you get lost in stuff and it overpowers you and you get overwhelmed. And life becomes frustrating.

Lost in externals, as he would say. Externals. All that matters.

I want a bath, but at the same time, I want to keep my will aligned with nature. Do this with every act. That way, if something occurs to spoil your bath, you will have readied the thought, well, this was not my only intention.

I also meant to keep my will in line with nature, which is impossible if I go all to pieces whenever anything bad happens. You go all to pieces when something bad happens because you're not aligned with the flow of life. You're not aligned with what is in the present moment.

That's the dysfunction. Wonderful teaching. And it's as relevant now as it was then.

Sickness is a problem for the body, not the mind, unless the mind decides that it is a problem. Lameness too, is the body's problem, not the mind's. Of course, he was talking from experience.

Say this to yourself, whatever the circumstance and you will find without fail that the problem pertains to something else, not to you. In other words, you can be free of problems. Another way of putting it, there is no problem.

There only is what is. And that's an incredible liberation if you can go through life

realizing that there are no problems. There are only situations.

If you can live that experience then you're a master, living as a master. There are no problems, only situations. Under no circumstances ever say, I have lost something.

Only say, I returned it. And now another one where you go, oh no. Because it could be misinterpreted as being insensitive.

And it has, this has happened historically. Some people did not fully understand the teaching and they thought it's to do with desensitizing yourself to life and putting up a barrier to life. Where you go, nothing touches me anymore, like a wall.

You sometimes have to put up a barrier with Zen practitioners too. Because it can also, this is certain similarities with his teaching and Zen. And the way he lived would be very much like a Zen master lives.

Just this is what is, what is the problem. Now some people observe the Zen masters and they kind of, but they can't, they don't live it in the right way, which means they don't surrender to what is, they put up a wall to what is, against what is. And that, this is how this teaching could be misinterpreted and lead to insensitivity.

So this is not becoming insensitive to life or to other human beings. It's to open yourself more to life and other human beings. On the surface, it might look desensitizing yourself.

No, it's opening yourself because it's all to do with acceptance. So there's a huge difference between putting up a wall to life and accepting life. And people who put up an inner wall, it's a misunderstanding.

And of course, behind that wall, they suffer. But of course, they're hiding their suffering behind the wall. I don't suffer.

I'm a Zen practitioner. I have gone beyond the wall. I've gone beyond.

And then the wife says something, leave me alone. I'm in control. Don't talk to me.

I'm meditating. I can't deal with it now. I need to meditate.

Go and meditate. It's acceptance. So very different.

But when you read this, the next thing especially, it could be misinterpreted. There is a deeper, there is a compassion there. So don't misinterpret.

Under no circumstances ever say, I have lost something, only I returned it. Did a child of yours die? No, it was returned.

Your wife died? No, she died. She was returned.

My land was confiscated? No, it too was returned. And then somebody says, but the person who took it was a thief.

And he says, why concern yourself with the means by which the original giver effects its return? As long as he entrusts it to you, look after it as something yours to enjoy only for a time. The way a traveler regards a hotel.

Whatever it is, if it's there, enjoy it, knowing that of course it will leave you or you have to let go or it will decay, whatever. Enjoy, no attachment. And this is real.

True enjoyment becomes possible only then, because if you're attached, you're not really enjoying the thing. You make it into a means of something else. Make me happy or make me bigger.

I own this. It makes me feel bigger. You're not really enjoying it.

Whenever you see someone in tears, distraught because they are parted from a child or have met with some material loss, be careful lest the impression move you to believe that their circumstances are truly bad. Have ready the reflection that they are not upset by what happened, but by their own view of the matter. Nevertheless, you should not disdain to sympathize with them, at least with comforting words or even to the extent of sharing outwardly in their grief, but do not commiserate with your whole heart and soul.

It's interesting. Do not commiserate, which means do not enter their unhappiness. Compassion, I wrote something like similar in the power of now that compassion has two aspects to it.

One, you can feel their pain. This is empathy. You feel the other person's suffering because you have had your suffering.

It's probably if you have never suffered, compassion would be difficult, but if you have suffered, you can feel the other person's suffering also. But for compassion, true compassion to arise, true compassion has a deeper aspect to it. In addition to that, there's a depth and that is the depth that today we started with, the depths within yourself.

If you can feel that depth and there's peace in there, there is a space that is not touched by suffering in you. So that in the background, so to speak, there can be that peace. You're connected with that deeper, the depths within yourself.

Even as you empathize with the other person, and feel the suffering of the other person. So you have the two dimensions. Yes, I feel your suffering, but at the same time, there's a deep peace underlying that.

And then compassion is something that's actually very helpful to the other person. If you

only commiserate, as he puts it, if you only commiserate with the other person, you're entering their frame of reference, you're entering their suffering. There's no help in that, really, to the other person.

The help comes if you stay rooted in the eternal within, and then you connect with the other person. That's really what he is saying. So there's a peace in the background, even as you empathize with the other.

And that's healing in the deepest sense. That is where healing flows from the depths of who you are to the other. And that's where it sometimes happens that the other person suddenly also becomes peaceful, doesn't know why.

So it's not, it doesn't work through verbalization. You can't say, you know, I should have known that your husband or wife was mortal, shouldn't you? No, that doesn't work.

It comes from the depths of who you are. That's the eternal. You don't need to talk about that.

And that's also, in any situation where there's, you empathize with others, whatever their problems. It might not be a physical problem. It could be that they are in a huge personal drama, and they want to talk to you about their drama.

Are you completely entering their reality? And then, of course, you get depleted after a while. Some people love that.

They say, this is what happened. Listen to me. Listen.

And they almost suck your energy in. And the energy, they need that energy to feed their drama. So if you enter it, after an hour of listening or trying to figure out some solution, well, why don't you do that?

And he said, no, I can't do that. Yeah, but all you could do, no, I've tried all that. It doesn't work.

Of course, they don't want an end to their drama. They are identified with that whole mind movement. So that doesn't help, except an hour later, you feel, I'm trying to be compassionate and helping.

It doesn't work. No, you don't enter their reality completely. You recognize that as a construct, an artificial construct created by their mind.

That's all the suffering. But you don't say that. You know it, but you don't say it.

Because the construct does not like to be challenged in that way. And you would not be reaching that human being. You would be only talking to the unhappy self, the mental construct.

And it is not receptive to that kind of talk. It doesn't want to look at itself, because that's the end of it. He was quite funny, too, from time to time.

What do we value? Externals. What do we look after?

Externals. So, of course, we are going to experience fear and nervousness. Faced with external circumstances that we judge to be bad, we cannot help but be frightened and apprehensive.

Please, God, we say, relieve me of my anxiety. Listen, stupid. You have hands.

God gave them to you himself. You might as well get on your knees and pray that your nose won't run. A better idea would be to wipe your nose and forego the prayer.

Show me one person who cares how they act. Someone for whom success is less important than the manner in which it is achieved. While out walking, who gives any thought to the act of walking itself?

Who pays attention to the process of planning, not just the outcome? If the plan works, of course a person is overjoyed and says, how well we planned it. Didn't I tell you with brains like ours it couldn't possibly fail?

But a different result leaves the person devastated, incapable of even finding words to explain what happened. So not just talk to the result. How you do is more important than the end result that you want to achieve.

How you do something is to do with your state of consciousness as you do it. Is your state of consciousness, does it come out of the inner power? That is, there's deep peace and a powerful energy flow and your complete attention is on the doing.

Or are you looking to what you want to achieve through the doing and then the doing is of a totally different quality? It goes, there's no, you get upset while you do things because you haven't arrived yet where you want to arrive. You look there and you do here.

And of course that's, I call that low quality action. And while you do, you're upset, you're angry with other people, you're blaming and accusing and shouting and angry with yourself, whatever, dysfunctional states, psychic disharmony. You're engaged in some big, important business enterprise, but how are you doing it?

In a state of psychic disharmony, creating unhappiness all around you. Yes, but I'm creating something great. No, you're creating unhappiness.

Whoever comes into contact with you gets infected by your inner dysfunctional state. And of course, and then if he does, he or she does finally achieve success. It's totally tainted by the energy that brought it about, karmic.

And then he drops dead. So how you do, pay attention to how, not always look to the end result because how is your state of consciousness now? When you're driving somewhere, what's more important, your state of consciousness in the moment of driving or arriving where you want to arrive?

Of course, most people think arriving is more important than this moment because there's something important at the other end. That is not true. What is more important is this moment because, why?

Because it's the only reality ever, this moment. There is nothing else. So how could it be less important than some imagined future moment?

And when that arrives, of course, then some other imagined future moment becomes more important than that one. This is normal living, but it's insane. These are deep-seated mind patterns in humans.

They are insane. They're normal. So many humans spend a lot of their lives in states of psychic disharmony or dysfunction, whatever you want to call it, and don't even know what they are doing.

They don't know what they're doing to themselves and they don't know what they're doing to others around them. They contaminate the planet, the world with this negativity. They don't know it.

So this is what, when you recognize that, you see it immediately in others around you, and if you are very alert, you can see it in yourself also. But the seeing is the beginning of freedom. When you see, okay, I'm creating a dysfunctional state right now, oh, now you have a choice to step out and become present.

When you see you're creating your own suffering, then you have a choice. You can step out of the stream of thinking, and the mind says, no, I can't step out of the stream of thinking. I just can't stop thinking.

I have to think about this. What's going to happen when this happens, and what if he doesn't, or that might go wrong and this can, what if I don't get it and this happens? Oh, God.

Oh, God. Hello. And of course, sometimes life does that to you, but it doesn't say hello, it goes whack.

And then for a moment, you're, oh, what was all that? It was all mental fictions, nothing to do with this moment, the only reality, this moment. God, I could read the whole book to you, it's so much in it.

Let any danger loom, and you will discover what we really practiced and trained for. So

what you learned as the spiritual teaching, when you are confronted with danger or challenge, then you can practice, that's the most important part, to apply it in actual life situations in your daily life. Now, if you don't practice, because of our negligence, we forever compound our problems and make our situations out to be worse than they actually are, very common.

So for instance, whenever I'm on board a ship and gaze into the deep or look around me and see nothing but ocean, I'm gripped by terror, imagining that if we wreck, I will have to swallow all this sea. It doesn't occur to me that around three pints will be about enough to do me in. So is it the sea that terrifies me?

No, it is my imagination. Again, in an earthquake, I am prone to picture the whole city coming down on top of me, whereas in fact a single brick is enough to dash my brains out. Simple.

The complexity is never in the present moment. The complexity of one's problems and one's situation is in here, not here. It's always simple.

A brick falls, okay. Or at the right moment, you step aside. Now, one important thing here, when you become endeavoring to become free of externals and dependency on externals, there needs to be a balance between dealing with externals.

You can't say nothing, I'm not dealing with anything anymore because I'm free of externals. And he talks about this. Let's read a little bit.

It isn't easy to combine and reconcile the two, the carefulness of a person devoted to externals and the dignity of one who is detached. A person devoted to externals, okay, now we need to do this and this and this and this. But without detachment, you don't have the dignity which is the spaciousness while you do things.

So it's the balance between giving attention, but at the same time, not attaching yourself to the external. This is not impossible, otherwise happiness would be impossible. It's something like going on an ocean voyage that was at his time a little bit more hazardous than it is now.

What can I do? Pick the captain, the boat, the date, and the best time to sail. But then a storm hits.

Well, it's no longer my business. I've done everything I could. It's somebody else's problem now, namely the captain's.

But then the boat actually begins to sink. What are my options? I do the only thing I'm in a position to do, drown.

But fearlessly, without bawling or crying out to God, because I know that what is born

must also die. I am not father time. I am a human being, a part of the whole, like an hour in a day.

Like the hour I must abide my time and like the hour pass. What difference does it make whether I go by drowning or disease? I have to go somehow.

Whatever you can control about externals, you do what you can. This I can do something about, this I can do, this I can do. Then it begins to unfold, and then in ways that you could not have predicted very often, and then it comes, you become aligned with what is as it unfolds.

Now there's one or two things that Epictetus did not yet see totally. That is, one is to some extent your inner state of consciousness and the external reality that you experience as your reality are linked. They're not totally separate.

So he doesn't talk about that. For him, there's the external that we need to accept, whatever is beyond our control. But as your inner state changes, your reality also changes, not in ways that is exact.

You cannot trace everything that happens to some thought or something like that. But your habitual state, your habitual vibrational frequency, emotional state, habitual thinking patterns, they tend to create certain reflections also in the outer. Very simple examples, of course.

If you believe that most humans are dishonest and out to deceive you, then you meet those people all the time. Isn't it strange? Any deep-seated belief that you have about other people or life, it tends to confirm itself in your experience, if only because perception becomes selective.

If you believe that everybody is dishonest, then you will look for, your perception is selective and honest people, you won't even see them. This is just one example. I could give hundreds of examples.

You don't see, if you look for the bad, you don't see the good in humans, for example. So your perception becomes selective and then reality confirms to you that all your thought patterns are actually correct. Yes, they are all evil.

They're all dishonest because it's become selective. That's one aspect. And also there's certain attractions.

You attract people that whatever you're afraid of, you tend to attract that. So if you're afraid of being robbed, you tend to attract that. I asked a famous person that I met a couple of years ago, do you have a, you don't have a bodyguard?

Because I've met some other famous people who always walk around with bodyguards.

And he said, well, actually, I'll tell you what it is, I'm sure he doesn't mind. Sting.

So I said, you don't have a bodyguard? He said, no. That would be like walking around with a gun in your pocket and then you attract certain situations where you need the gun.

And of course, that's very true. So that's inner states and outer reality. Another thing he didn't quite see yet as deeply is that thinking can be transcended altogether, not continuously, but the ability to step out of the stream of thinking and just be present in that spaciousness.

That's a creative state. Creative in the sense of not necessarily creating a work of art, could be that, but it doesn't. Creative in the sense of dealing with life as it happens in this moment in a creative fashion and not a conditioned way.

Responding creatively to what this moment requires, that's creativity. But that does not happen if you apply preconditioned thinking patterns to what happens in this moment, because then you will be judging, interpreting according to your past conditioning, what's happening in this moment. And it's never, that's never it.

You're imposing the past on the present. And so people do that with other humans. They immediately judge them according to their conditioning in the mind.

Can you meet another human without judgment? Well, for to be able to do that, you have to stop thinking, because every thought about that other human being is going to be some kind of judgment. So is that possible?

Can you come to be with and face another human being and look at him or her and listen to him or her and just be a spacious presence while you look and listen to him or her? Yes, you can try it. Look at me in the same way that I look at you.

Do I need some judgment about you? What can that add to the experience of this moment? It doesn't add anything.

It detracts from the aliveness that is in you and that is in me and that is all around us. It detracts from that. Any judgment and reality immediately shrinks into quietness.

That's the way it is. You have a suspicion and suddenly you judge the other human being or the situation that you are in. It immediately gets fixed.

It becomes like a piece of ice where before there was flowing water. And suddenly you pronounce some mental judgment or some mental conclusion. This is how it is.

This is how it is. And the whole flow of water suddenly gets frozen. And it's hard.

Once you have fixed reality in your mind like that, you're stuck with that. And whenever

you meet that other human being that you have imposed that on, you get that rigidity that you cannot allow the human to be other than the judgment that you have imposed upon him or her. And if they display other behavior that completely contradicts your judgment, you won't even see it.

Or you will misinterpret that in some way. So that's, can you be, and this is perhaps the essential teaching, can you be spacious this moment here? Spacious as a presence.

Be here as a presence rather than a person. You don't lose anything. You can pick up the person that you are when you walk out of here.

The person will still be there, don't worry, if you still want it. You can pick up the person with all its history and problems. But for the time being, just practice with other humans.

That's practice. Being a spacious presence for them while you listen to them. Or look at them.

Don't tell them what you're doing, because it's not a doing anyway. Just, this is wonderful, not having to judge other humans. This is gradually the ability in you to do that.

It's not a doing, judging is a doing, but language is limited. The ability for you to do that grows as you practice being with others, not impose judgments. And your mind says, yeah, but you become defenseless.

Silly nonsense. You don't become defenseless. And there are things, if there are obvious things about another person, you see it and you still don't judge it.

If a person comes and says, look, I'll sell you this gold watch for \$50. I paid \$5,000 for it. I'll take \$50.

You say, no thanks. You don't have to say, you're a thief. You probably stole it somewhere.

Or you got it in Thailand for \$10, and now you're wanting to sell it to me. No, no thanks. You see, without even saying anything, you see the intention behind it, and you still can be compassionate.

You don't say how bad this human is. You just walk away. It's fine.

Don't need to, because who knows that human may awaken tomorrow through some drastic event. And suddenly, if you had judged that person and said he's a thief, well, maybe tomorrow he suddenly awakens and the thief collapses. So that is not who he or she is in their essence.

You don't get the essence through judgment. The essence in the other human becomes

obscured, and the essence in yourself becomes obscured to yourself. Just a little bit more.

Here, first of all, a very extreme one. Don't judge it. Just listen.

It's a dialogue, very short. His son died. What happened?

What happened to him? What happened? His son died.

Nothing else? Nothing. The ship was lost.

What happened? The ship was lost. He was thrown into jail.

What happened? He was thrown into jail. He's in a bad situation.

Discrimination is a stock comment that everyone adds on their own account. So the man I mentioned to you earlier, Stockdale, he practiced these extreme teachings in an extreme situation and as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam for seven years, and he says it worked for him. Acceptance and non-judgments.

No more suffering. Physical pain may still be there, but no suffering. Suffering being the superstructure on top of the physical pain, the mentally created superstructure on top of it.

And this is an interesting little piece now about people who are waking up. He doesn't use that term. I use that term.

People who are beginning to wake up, living in presence. The tendency can be for them to be drawn back into unconsciousness with the habitual people that they spend time with. And he talks about that here.

It is inevitable if you enter into relations with people on a regular basis, either for conversation, dining, or simple friendship, that you will grow to be like them, unless you can get them to emulate you. So it's either you go there or they come to you. Place an extinguished piece of coal next to a live one, and either it will cause the other one to die out, or the live one will make the other reignite.

It's true. Since a lot is at stake, you should be careful about fraternizing with non-philosophers, as he calls it, in these contexts. Remember that if you consort with someone covered in dirt, you can hardly avoid getting a little grimy yourself.

He's talking to people in whom this is just growing, not to people where it's already fully manifested. They can associate with anybody. But in people in whom it is growing, the presence is arising, it can very easily become obscured again by people you meet.

It becomes obscured by a glass of alcohol. Once presence is firmly there, even one or

two glasses of alcohol won't make any difference. You can have it or you don't have it.

But while it's arising, it's better not to protect it a little bit, like a delicate flower that grows. I mean, what are you going to do if your friends start nattering about gladiators, horses, and sports stars? Or even worse, if he starts gossiping about shared acquaintances?

He's good. She's bad. It's good this happened.

It's too bad about that. What if he sneers, ridicules, and even plays slow-down tricks? Do any of you have the musician's ability to pick up an instrument, immediately identify which strings need attention, and bring the whole instrument into tune?

Or Socrates' gift in every setting of winning over the company to his side? Not likely. Inevitably, you're going to adopt the common person's mentality instead.

So why are they stronger than you? Because they talk such garbage from conviction, whereas your fine talk is no more than lip service. It lacks life and vigor.

Anyone listening to your speeches might well come to hate that damned virtue you keep proclaiming. That's why those fools get the better of you. Conviction is quite a potent and irresistible force.

So until those fine principles take root in you so that you can begin to rely on them a little, I advise you to use discretion in associating with such people. Otherwise, whatever you write down in class will melt away like wax in the sun. Keep out of the sun, then, so long as your principles are as pliant as wax.

This is why philosophers say that we should even leave our native land, since old habits pull us back and make it hard to embark on new routine. Also, we can't stand running into people who say, look at him, this so-and-so trying to become a philosopher, ha-ha-ha. So it's better not to talk, really, about what you're practicing or learning, as little as possible, unless there's receptivity in the other human.

If there's no receptivity, then it's enough for you to practice, not talk about it. Let's see what else I can find. Here's a funny one.

It shows a lack of refinement to spend a lot of time exercising, eating, drinking, defecating, or copulating. Tending to the body's needs should be done incidentally, as it were. The mind and its functions require the bulk of your attention.

Give attention to your mind. That really means be present with your mind. So you've seen the wake-up call.

Thank you. Vigilance is required. Vigilance is that alertness, alertness, especially alert to see what your mind is, what kind of thoughts your mind is producing.

A helpful thing also is the alertness to sense perceptions. That slows down the mind considerably and brings you into the present moment, the surface of the present moment. Sense perceptions are the surface of the present moment.

But if you touch the surface of the present moment, you can go deeper from there into the depths of the present moment, which is your spacious consciousness itself. So alertness to sense perceptions is the first, is really where the portal begins to open into the present moment. If you ask, where is the present moment?

How do I get out of my mind into now, the simplicity of now, the reality of now, the power of now? Sense perceptions, looking, listening, smelling, touching. Oh, you're suddenly back in the now.

It's the surface, but that's a good start. And then you sense underlying the sense perceptions, the field of presence. You can't, it has no form, but it's there, that which makes the perception possible.

And then you have, and that's the way to live, is to have that in the background while you deal, either just contemplate sense perceptions or begin to deal with things here, continuing to sense the presence that you are in the background. What is presence? This.

And then you realize that it's not just inside you, the presence is within and without. The, in other words, the universe around you is not just inside you, begins to feel more alive. It's almost as if you could sense an aliveness, even in the space.

So it's within and without. You sense that aliveness, which has no form, formless aliveness. You can't put it under a microscope.

It is the precondition for everything. You cannot examine it as an object of consciousness. Okay, I'm now going to look and examine the aliveness of presence.

Who is looking? The aliveness of presence. I'm now going to looking at it.

You can't. It is it. I am it.

I cannot look at I as if I cannot, if I make myself into an object that I'm going to analyze or look at, it doesn't work. The, the presence is the, is the eternal I. So you can only be it, but you cannot make it an object and say, oh, there it is.

It is prior to everything. So you are prior to everything. In that sense, there's nothing you need to understand to realize who you are.

What you need to understand perhaps is to what prevents you from realizing who you are. That's helpful to know, but who you are, you can't know because it's the eternal subject. It can never be an object.

And so that's, you don't need to understand more about yourself to wake up spiritually, to be who you are in your essence. You are already that. The only understanding would be helpful to see how that realization is obscured in you.

So what you understand is never the reality of who you are. It's the illusion that obscures who you are, that you can understand to some extent. So when you judge another human being, whatever you say about them is also tends to be the, the illusory self that you see there.

The mind, the mental construct, which either is, might actually be there, or it's a total projection of your mind or completely a combination of the two. So the, you have the knowing, two types of knowing, conceptual knowing and non-conceptual knowing, which most humans don't realize yet the possibility of that. So that's quite a relief that you don't, there's nothing you can add to who you are already by some further understanding through the mind.

It's by relinquishing, trying to figure something out about who you are, that you suddenly, who you are in your depths opens up now. So this is the same teaching as Epictetus, going and taking it a little bit further. We're in a different time period.

More humans are open to it. And the need for awakening is much greater now for humanity or to awaken. At his time, it was still a luxury.

Now we have to, and that's good. The essence of the teaching is that we have to awaken. Awakening is of course, the freedom from having to think.

That's really what it comes down to. Yes. You don't have to think.

You can, if you want to, but increasingly you can go through life without an excessive baggage of thought. You can go through life without thinking. Suddenly you feel much lighter.

Situations are much lighter. Other human beings are lighter to you. They're not a problem to you.

Amazing things happen. As you practice, the ultimate renunciation, renunciation is a religious, spiritual term. It's the ultimate and usually it's used with reference to possessions, sexual relations, money, power, renunciation of whatever.

Traditionally, the renunciates in India possess nothing. They have nothing and that was also for a long time a tradition in Europe in the Middle Ages and early Christianity. In early Christianity, people lived in the desert, renouncing everything.

The desert fathers, as they're called. And that's all very nice, but if the ultimate renunciation hasn't happened, then all that is not even that helpful. If thinking, the

compulsion to think and addiction to thinking and identification with thinking is not renounced, all other renunciations don't really make that much difference because you would still be attached to whatever thoughts arise in your mind.

And if you've renounced possessions, the first thought that will arise in your mind will be, I am someone who has renounced all possessions. You haven't renounced thinking. So the possessions that you were identified with, which in reality of course was only a thought, which means this is mine.

It is part of who I am. That was a thought you had identified with, but now you let go of that. And that's replaced by another thought that you identify with, which is, I'm the one who has renounced and all these inferior humans have not renounced.

Basically, nothing has changed. Now, you could of course have somebody who renounces all possessions and at the same time renounces self-reference to thinking, then that's fine. And you could also have someone who has all possessions and renounces thinking and possessions are still there, but don't matter anymore.

Or perhaps he'll give them away. Who knows? But the ultimate renunciation is breaking the addiction to thinking as a dysfunctional, useless activity.

And then apply thought when it's needed for certain things. That's fine. And be free when it's not needed, especially in relationships.

A lot of the time, thought isn't needed in a true deep relationship. Transcendence of thought is needed for a relationship to be deep and true. Of course you talk to each other, but the foundation of the relationship must be the space, the inner space in each one, which is ultimately one space, one consciousness.

So practice the ultimate renunciation and then, ah, what a relief. Don't have to think all the time. But don't go to sleep.

Stay awake. Okay? Thank you.

So as we sit here, I'd like to put a little question mark into your mind and like you to ask yourself whether at this moment you're thinking. So you will know the answer. And try it again.

I'll stop speaking for a few seconds. And just be alert inside yourself to find out whether you're thinking, because usually you don't even know that you're thinking. You're just, you are the thinking.

So there's no outside thing that knows that you are thinking. You are just the thinking. You become the thinking, the thinker.

And the thinker is the person. And to step out of the person, you have to experience that

there is a dimension in you where the person is not. But something deeper is there.

That's why we want to explore. So again, a moment of stillness. In the power of now, I talk about a mouse, sorry, a cat watching a mouse hole.

Now, if you've ever watched a cat watching a mouse hole, then you will have noticed that the cat could spend a long time there being extremely alert and just watching in the same way that my dog watches a treat when I put it down and say, not yet. And then the dog goes. And so the cat watches the mouse hole.

It's in a state of complete attention. So one spiritual master, I believe it was a Sufi master, said his teacher had been a cat when he was asked who had been his spiritual teacher. He said, a cat?

How is that? And he said, I watched a cat watching a mouse hole. And by watching a cat watching a mouse hole, I realized, I awakened.

Because by watching a cat, he entered a state of alert attention in which there's no thinking, like now. Just that. There's no, just a short moment, but it doesn't matter how long.

It's a wonderful thing to realize that you can not think. It's a wonderful thing to realize that you are still there when you're not thinking. As Oprah said, when we started for the first time with a moment of silence and we started to talk again, she said, okay, I'm still here.

I just checked in. I'm still alive. I'm still here.

I haven't disappeared. One more time. Be alert.

You need to be alert to know whether you're thinking or not. So there's an alertness like a cat and there may be thinking or there may not be thinking. There may just be the alertness.

I also mentioned in the Power of Now that another question you can ask yourself is, what's my next thought going to be? I'm going to just watch out, see what's the next thought is that's going to come into my mind. And if you're very alert, it'll be quite a while before the next thought comes.

But the moment the degree of alertness decreases, thoughts come flooding back in. Interesting experiments you can do with yourself and your mind. Now, from the point of view of the usual thinking mind, the realization that there is a dimension in you where thinking either does not happen at all or becomes unimportant.

To the thinking mind, that is either a threat or completely uninteresting. Because what could be less interesting than not thinking? So from the point of view of the thinking

mind, the state of consciousness in which there is no thinking is either a threat.

Oh, I don't want to go there. I'm going to disappear. But of course, Oprah didn't disappear after the stillness.

I'm still there. I'm still alive. And then when she said that, I said, perhaps you're even more alive now.

And that is pointing to something. There is an intensification of aliveness when you begin to enter that, let's call it, dimension in yourself. The dimension in which compulsive thinking doesn't operate anymore.

But you have to be careful because you could easily, because, okay, what we're doing here is we rise above thinking. We become so alert that thinking either doesn't happen or is seen as unimportant. From there, you can easily suddenly drop through thinking to below thought.

In other words, you go to hot sleep. So when you stop thinking, there's the alertness. Here's the thinking level.

That's the normal level for most human beings while they are awake. And even when they dream, they're still going on. Here's the thinking level.

Underneath the thinking level, there's consciousness. Above the thinking level, there's consciousness. And even within thinking, there's consciousness.

Thinking is an expression of consciousness. But there are infinite varieties of manifestations or expressions of consciousness. This flower is an expression of consciousness taking on the form, this beautiful form, incredible beauty.

Consciousness being born into forms. And consciousness, not all consciousness is form. There is a dimension of consciousness that is formless, out of which all forms come, the ground of all being.

And that's what we are exploring here. Thinking. You rise above thinking or you fall below thinking.

My dog is below thinking. Now that doesn't mean that the dog is stupid. The dog has its own intelligence.

And in some ways, the dog is superior to humans in some ways. For example, it's more joyful than most humans, has more fun than most humans, lives more intensely in the present moment where life is than most humans, doesn't worry like most humans do, and is loving towards all beings. Some dogs are loving only towards certain beings, but our dog is loving towards all beings.

But the dog doesn't think. The dog is conscious, but there's no conceptual thinking. I'm sure the dog doesn't have thoughts.

The other day, the dog was in the bedroom in his little house. Quite late, it was already night. The dog was already sleeping.

And I was still doing things near the door, the entrance door to the apartment. I was opening the sliding door and looking for something in my coat. And when the dog heard the sliding door near the exit, she came out, she must have woken up and heard a noise, came out running to see what I was doing, whether I was getting my coat to go out.

So she came running. And then for 10 seconds, the dog stood there looking at me and realized I was just taking something out of a pocket, and I wasn't going out. So after five seconds, the dog must have realized I wasn't going out and went straight back into her house and back to sleep.

Now, did the dog begin to think in her house, oh, I can hear something. He's opening the sliding door to the wardrobe. I wonder if he's getting the coat out to go out.

And then I need to have a look because he may leave me alone here. Okay, I'm going to have a look to see what's happening. And then the dog would go and look, oh, what's he doing there?

Oh, I think he's just taking something out of his pocket. He's not going out after all. Why did I bother to come out?

I might as well go back to sleep. Now, I'm sure that's not how it happened, but that's what would have happened for a human doing that. Now, the strange thing, how would that happen for a dog?

The whole thing must have happened without conceptualization. There was the listening to the noise, and there was a sudden knowing that that noise of the door could mean that I'm going out. And then there was just getting up, finding out.

I'm sure, although you can't really get into the dog's mind, I've tried, I'm sure it was without any decision-making process or mental commentary. There was just an immediate response to a situation, and then there was a recognition of what was going on in that situation, and immediately not a decision to go back to bed, but just a going back to bed. So there was consciousness there at work, but not through conceptualization.

And for humans, of course, it would be usually different. There would be, as you're doing that, there would be the running commentary that I just mentioned, if the dog had a human mind. There are some anthropologists who have looked at the history of the human race, and they wondered where or how did thinking start to start?

When did humans begin to think? And it seems likely that at first there was no conceptual thinking. There was only thinking in images.

So when they closed their eyes, they could suddenly see certain images of things that had happened, or things that they imagined. So the moment they closed their eyes, certain images would be there, and when they opened their eyes, they still lived very much like the dog, just an immediate response without the interference of conceptualization. And then thinking started.

And there's one anthropologist who has put forward the theory. He has some evidence for it. I forgot what the evidence is, but his theory is very controversial.

I believe, however, that he may be right. He believed that at first when thinking began to happen in humans, and thinking in the sense of words in your mind, those humans at first thought that some entity, a god or a spirit, was talking to them. And so the voice of the god or spirit that suddenly appeared in their head said, oh, you better go to the lake and make sure that you catch another fish.

And they would go, oh, why is there no fish today? Somebody is talking. Why don't you go there?

There might be a better catch there. Okay, thank you. I got a message.

I should be going there. It was their own thoughts, but for a long time, because it was something new, they didn't realize that these were their thoughts. They believed some spirit helper or something was telling them to do something.

And then, of course, sometimes it might also be the same kind of voice that is telling these days the terrorists to go and shoot people. You must shoot these evil people. Go, do it.

Oh, okay, I'll do it. No idea that they are obeying something that is in their own mind. And so that's how it all started.

And then thousands of years passed. And now we have human beings who are completely identified with mind. And their whole sense of self is derived from mind, from mind activity.

And the awakening of consciousness is the realization that beyond your mind, there is a great depth to who you are and great freedom and a far greater intelligence than is in your thinking mind. Then the thinking mind can be used by that greater intelligence. But for the thinking mind to be used by that greater intelligence, you have to find within yourself that greater intelligence, which we could call unconditioned consciousness.

You have to find that in yourself. If we don't find it, we are going to kill ourselves,

because this evolutionary level where we are identified with thinking is no longer functioning well. It has become destructive.

It has reached the end of its lifespan or usefulness. And so if humans don't achieve the transition, they will either regress to an earlier stage of development and then have another go. It could take a few hundred thousand years, but the universe is patient.

Or the species becomes extinct, and then consciousness simply decides to move through other channels to express itself. It could be another life form very easily. Consciousness does not mind through which channel it comes into this world, but it wants to come into this world.

I don't know why, but I know that consciousness wants to be born fully into this world from another realm, from the timeless, unmanifested, where consciousness does not evolve. It's already full and complete, because it's timeless. But from the timeless realm, for consciousness you can use other words if you want.

The Tao, God, transcendental reality, doesn't matter, just words. That which we cannot name, it wants to come through the forms into this world and somehow do something here. Perhaps it wants to dissolve this world, to outshine this world, to transform it, to spiritualize matter, transformation of the universe.

But I know what our task is, to wake up here out of being trapped in your own little mind, the little mind. It's not yours, it's just the human mind. And that's why I started today by asking you to see if you can have a little space inside yourself where you're actually not thinking, but still awake and alert.

That's the opening into the greater intelligence. At first it seems there's nothing happening. No, don't expect anything to happen, that will come.

It's the beginning, you open the door. You're opening the door to another dimension. Now the thinking mind knows nothing of it, and you cannot use it to enter that dimension.

The moment you use it and try to figure something out, what's in there, you're out again, you're not in that dimension anymore. We are opening the door to another dimension of consciousness within ourselves. And then see if the door can stay open while we go about our daily business, or if it can be open occasionally, and then as we go about our daily business.

And from the point of view of the mind, it's not interesting because there's nothing, to the mind it's nothing. And that's fine, to the mind it's not interesting. And of course it isn't, because when you're not thinking for a moment, nobody could possibly call that interesting.

It's deeper than interesting. But at first it might appear, well there's nothing there, there's nothing happening. But you have to persist and see, wait a little, and see if you can enter that dimension more fully.

Just you open the door, and first of all you experience not so much a positive thing, but an increasing absence of negative things. All the negative things that are continuously produced by the thinking mind, by unnecessary thinking. So as you bring that dimension into your life, you experience an increasing absence of the negativity that is normal when you're totally trapped in your mind.

All the negative thoughts that go through your head, and that emotions then respond to. So our destiny is to shift from thought into the realm of no thought, and then being able to use thought from there. In fact, who or what is it that then uses thought?

The intelligence that is the realm of no thought then uses your mind. And then you become productive in this world. You contribute something truly new to this world, in whatever form.

Whether you're an artist, or a writer, or you work with people, or you are engaged in some organization, you then make a very different contribution because it's no longer ego-based. Ego is the unobserved mind. The mind without awareness.

That you mistake for who you are. Me, the person. And it's a dreadful thing to live your entire life never going beyond the personal dimension.

Never seeing the transcendent dimension in yourself and in the world. So it's essential then to no longer be trapped continuously in thought. And don't expect results from the dimension of no thought.

It could be a while before there's any tangible result on an external level. In other words, that you suddenly write a masterpiece, or you suddenly become a great performer, or suddenly you help thousands of people with this or that and become a beneficial influence in this world. It could take a while, and we don't know what form it'll take.

It may not happen immediately, but as you begin to enter that dimension occasionally, and then the mind says, you see, nothing is happening. I've been practicing being free of thinking for a few months now, and my life hasn't changed at all. It's still the same.

In fact, it's become less interesting because I worry less. Of course, worry makes your life very interesting. And it gives you the impression that your life is so important.

My life is so important that I'm worrying all the time, and these are very important things I need to worry about. And so then from the point of view of the mind, your life has become less important. So, okay, I've been doing it for several months.

That's enough. I'm going back to my old ways. And sometimes people write to me and say, okay, I've been practicing awareness, presence for a year now, and where do I go from here?

There were years when I lived mainly in the state of awareness without any, many tangible results. Occasionally I would help people. That was very nice.

I enjoyed that. Help would, not I would help, but help would come through that opening. But beyond that, there wasn't much happening that went on for years.

And occasionally I thought, well, there is more that could happen, but it's not happening yet. That's fine. And in the meantime, there was a, I realized retrospectively, there was a, whatever words we use are not quite right, but let's just put it like this, there was a buildup gradually of energy, of presence power, one could say.

There was an intensification of that in the background of my life that had no visible manifestation really in the external, not very much. And so that presence was there. And one day, in fact, I gave a little, it came to me to say, please, please I can do more.

I said to myself, accelerate, please. Accelerate. Acceleration.

I was talking to myself, because you're always just talking to yourself. And then a little bit later, it happened. And then the energy stream came that became a book.

And so on. And in the intensification of what I was doing already, on a very small scale, but suddenly there was a whoosh coming into this world. Whoosh.

But for years, there was just empty space mostly inside, walking around and just very pleasant, enjoying the beauty of every moment of the trees and of the animals. And something was there in the background. And then finally it came whoosh into this world.

And perhaps when it's, it may well be that after a while the energy stream that goes out may subside again and I just go back into whoosh, just the space. In some way I do that continuously, because after a talk, whoosh, you go back into whoosh. So there's the coming out of the consciousness stream going into words and into energy that flows out and then the return into just stillness, space.

No need to think very much unless there's something to think about. Where am I going for dinner? Where do I have enough?

But even there, it's amazing how many things you can do without unnecessary thinking. Just experiment. I recommend that you experiment in your daily life.

This is the most beautiful spiritual practice. Experiment whether you can do many little things without the interference of thinking, with just presence or awareness there. What I mean by that is you are conscious that you're doing something, but you're not thinking

about it.

And whether you can actually even register things without formulating words in your mind. Little things, little experiments, it's all very fascinating. You can have a little clock, if you have a watch or a clock that doesn't have, especially if it doesn't have digitals on it, you can experiment with yourself and see whether you can look at a clock or a watch and know what time it is without in your mind telling yourself what time it is.

And that's quite a strange thing. There is a knowing without conceptualization then. If you know that it is a certain time, whatever it is, without saying to yourself that time it is.

You don't do it with a digital clock because when you read the numbers it's almost impossible not to say the numbers in your mind. Just one little experiment and then many other things when you're doing a certain task. Every master, the moment you become a master you don't think anymore.

Intuition takes over. Otherwise you can't be a master. Sometimes you have to learn first gradually through the mind to do something.

There may be certain steps that you need to learn, whether you're building something or whatever it is that you do, learning to play the piano or whatever it is. At first it's driving a car, whatever. At first it takes effort to learn, to become an artist, a painter.

You learn the techniques and so on. And then a moment comes when all that is not helpful anymore. If you never go beyond the techniques you won't be a great artist.

A great artist knows the techniques and then steps beyond it and then something else takes over. And that's where your life becomes empowered. But you need to open the door to the empowerment.

And it's not, you cannot get there through thinking. And even something that seems to be an intellectual thing, like writing a book, if there's any inspiration or power in the book, whether it's fiction or non-fiction, it has to come from the place, the empty space inside you that you go into where for a moment you close your eyes and then you look again and nothing comes. You go back and you look again until something comes through spontaneously.

But it won't come spontaneously. You have to have learned, you need to learn to write first before you, I mean, before you can write a book you need to be able to write. Or if you want to become a great tennis player, you cannot go into the state of no thought very deeply and suddenly step on a tennis court and take a racket and be immediately a great tennis player.

You have to go through many steps first before the intuition can take over. But that's

where the dividing line is between somebody who has learned to do something well, and many people do that, and somebody who brings in something new or goes beyond doing something technically well, where inspiration comes in, where empowerment comes in. So it's vital to find that dimension in yourself.

So go around your daily life, see how much you can actually do without the interference of conceptualization. It's amazing. Observe yourself.

Is it possible for you to be for a moment free of thinking at any given time? For example, now, no thought, just presence. You haven't disappeared, but what is there to add to this moment by thinking about something?

You don't need to add anything. And what is there then when you're not thinking? What's there left of you, what you had called you?

There is definitely something there. No past, let's say, because to have a past, you need to think about your past. To have a future, you need to think about your future.

Now, if you're not thinking about your past and your future, you don't have a past and a future. There's only now-ness. There's only this moment.

So you have, let's say, you have no past, you have no future, there's only this moment now, and there's nothing to think about. There's still something there, and that's the essence of who you are, consciousness itself. It cannot be defined.

It's neither big, nor small, nor fat, nor thin, nor old, nor young. Timeless essence has no form. There's nothing much you can say about it, but there's definitely a strong sense of beingness or aliveness that's left when you take that, the rest, away.

And that's when you take thought away. You haven't disappeared. In fact, thought wasn't at all who you are.

You thought so, but it wasn't. If you take thought away, you can actually, you touch the essence. You know the essence and when I say you know the essence, that's not absolutely correct, because the moment we use words, we create duality.

You know yourself as the essence. You don't know it like a subject and object knowing. I know this.

In this world, that's through thought, there's always the knowing subject and that which is known. But here, the knowing subject and the knower and the known are one. You know yourself to be consciousness.

It's not separate. There isn't a me that says, I am consciousness. There's consciousness, you know yourself as consciousness.

I am that. No separation, no division anymore. And when I put it into words, it sounds almost complicated, because we cannot really verbalize because it's too simple.

It's not a differentiated state. Everything out here is differentiated. This is undifferentiated state of pure intelligence or pure consciousness.

It's always there to be easy to just touch it in you. It's always underneath the mental noise in everyone. It's there for you, waiting for you, almost one could say.

It's waiting and it wants you to come through you. Just open, open, and it comes through. It doesn't matter if you are a saint or a sinner.

You open, there's a space between two thoughts, and it comes through. What you did in the past is irrelevant, whether you accumulated many spiritual credits by spending 20 years in a monastery, or whether you're stuck in a prison and the opening happens and the spirit doesn't ask, well, are you qualified for me to come through? It will come through wherever there is an opening.

So your personal past doesn't have that much to do with it. The only thing is it got you here to this moment where you realize the possibility of living in a different state of consciousness. Your past got you here.

Well, that's good enough. Whether your past was a successful past or a failure past, whether you built up great things already in your life, or whether you messed your life up completely, becomes irrelevant. So you become free from the past through this, because another dimension comes in.

This is why it has happened to some people who were criminals, and at some point suddenly all that subsided, and a space opened up inside them, and the unhappy self suddenly wasn't operating anymore. Now, to some people it comes as a spiritual experience, which means it comes and then after a while they say, oh God, it's gone, I lost it. Okay, that's the normal thing.

Sometimes it comes once and stays forever, you never lose the connection again with the open space. But for many people, first it comes and then it leaves them, and they don't realize that they can actually welcome it and encourage it. You don't have to wait for it to come again at some point.

Why don't you ask for it to come back? I'm not saying you ask like, please come back. No, you ask for it to come back by simply walking across the room without thought.

Just see if I can walk across the room without needing to be already where I want to get to, the door, just be present in every step. Can you be present in each step as you walk across the room? Oh, you're not thinking, you're just present with that.

Can I be present while I look out of the window to check the weather, and can I know what the weather is like without saying something to myself or having some kind of relationship or attitude towards the weather? Can I open the curtains in the morning and say nothing, just look and know? There's either sunshine or there's rain or whatever it is.

You open the window and there is an awareness that's looking through your eyes. And do you have to say something to yourself then? Do you have to say, oh, it's another dreary day.

I can't take any more of this. Do you have to say that, or is it just an old habit that you've slipped into? Do you have to say, oh, I hope it stays like that today, or whatever, it's going to be too hot, or whatever comment you have, do you need to comment, or can you look out of the window and just know and be the knowing without conceptualization and without like or dislike, just allow it to be and know in the same way you would, I suggested you can look at your watch and know what time it is without saying to yourself what time it is. And so you look out of the window, and for a moment there is a space, you are the space through which the perception happens.

You are not a person. Don't worry, the person is still there on some level, so you're not going to be spaced out for the rest of your life and then walk around, oh, I don't know where I am anymore. That doesn't happen.

But it's a wonderful thing if you realize that you can actually be there as the counter space for whatever you are looking at. Even at this moment, you're looking at this person, and this person is looking at you. Can you be the conscious space for the perception, for the looking, rather than be a person that always has some kind of thing to say, like, what's he talking about?

That's a thought. I don't understand. That's a thought.

Can you explain more? I don't get it. Don't believe that thought.

The thought says I don't get it, and of course on the level of thought you don't get it, but on another level you get it. You get it by being it. And so, can you be in your car at the traffic light and just be there as the space for the perception of the red light?

It's peaceful. Suddenly the traffic light becomes peaceful. You are there as you're just seeing.

There's the seeing and there's the space. Why comment on the red light or think about something that's going to happen or might happen or happened in the past or something? Just be, perceive, and be the space.

And then the strange thing is, that which you perceive is more alive, and even the traffic light, the red light, has a beauty to it. It sounds very strange, and normally it's only

sometimes people who take acid talk about weird things like, when I saw the traffic light, I went, wow. No, you don't need to take acid for that, and it may not be a wow, but it may be, wow, that has its own beauty and aliveness, that colour.

And you're not saying it, you just know it. And if you can see the traffic light like that, even more so, that will be the case even more so if you look at the tree that's right next to the traffic light. It has a presence, it has a beauty, it has an aliveness, beyond the concept of tree or the bird that just landed on a branch.

An aliveness, a beingness that you then recognize from your own beingness and aliveness that before was obscured by mental noise. So unless you become like little children, because this has something to do with how little children perceive the world before they conceptualize. Unless you become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Ah, so that's what it is. But it's an even deeper state than the child state, because the child still has to go through the thinking stage and then come out of it. The child has certain things still in common with the dog, not quite, but still no conceptualization, just wonder.

And so that's a gradual practice of choosing to step out of the conceptualizing mind whenever it is unnecessary, which is about, depending on your life activity, 80% of the time, you don't need to think a lot. You could think thoughts may come and go, but you don't, there's no need to continuously think. It's become familiar with spaciousness.

And then think when it's necessary. And you be empowered then and your thinking becomes actually empowered. You can actually, if you wanted to create something in this world, this is what some popular books talk about, manifesting your external reality, of course you can, through applying focused thinking, you can manifest, but if you're in touch with the spaciousness, the unconditioned consciousness inside, then that comes through and will manifest through you.

And then it comes as a sudden knowing that this is what I want to do, but the I that wants to do it, it's not the ego I, it is the deeper I. So you become aligned with what the universe wants, it's not just what the little me wants. That's the beauty of that.

So you can then, you as the greater consciousness can manifest if you want to. Don't fall into the trap of believing that something that you manifest is going to bring you fulfillment. It's only on an external level, the fulfillment needs to be there already now.

Fulfillment is being in touch with that dimension in yourself before anything happens. That's where fulfillment lies. The rest is the divine play of form.

But the divine wants to play out there, it wants the manifestation. It wants two things, there are two movements in the universe. One is the movement into differentiation and

into form and into birth, into bodies, into thinking.

The universe started from a point of nothingness. That nothingness became one, let's just, it's all not quite right because we can't really talk about it. Out of the nothingness came the ball, whatever, before the Big Bang happened.

There was just one point of potentiality for the entire universe. Then at some point the explosion, if we could call it that, out of that was the beginning of the process of differentiation into increasing number of different forms. And we are still part of that explosion into greater and greater differentiation.

But at the same time, this is the pull, the outward pull. Then there's the inward pull back to the source, to the timeless source out of which it all came. And so we as human beings are at a transitional stage where we are becoming strongly aware of the pull back to the source.

So there are two movements in the universe. One is out into more and more form and more and more thinking, it's still there, that movement. There are still many people who believe that the problems of this world can be solved if we just think harder about them, have more committee meetings about the problems of the world and discuss them, and eventually they can be solved.

They don't realize that the problems of the world are there because we have lost touch with the source out of which everything came. So by going into further differentiation, we cannot solve the problems, we'll actually increase them. So we need to balance now, return to the source and going out into the world.

It doesn't mean we don't do anything anymore. We can still create and do, but not lose ourselves in creating and doing and thinking. Lose ourselves in the mind.

Connect it with the timeless, formless source of all life within, the space of no thought. Connect it with that. Then we can create, not we as persons, but we as a universal movement of consciousness.

Consciousness wants us to be co-creators of the universe, of form. So we can be that, but only if we are connected. We need conscious connection with the source.

So that's the destiny. That's your life purpose. That's why we are here.

And if it sounds complicated to your mind, it's only to the mind. It's not complicated at all. It's actually very, very simple.

It's so simple that you can't even think about it. Welcome. As we sit here, we can drift into discursive thinking or simply be still and present using the opportunity of being in this collective energy field to support the arising dimension of stillness in you, which is

also power, unconditioned, timeless.

So you give up all knowing, the accumulated knowledge, don't need it here, in order to access the source of all knowledge.